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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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JESUS *answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of* GOD.

THESE Words are our SAVIOUR's Answer to *Nicodemus*; and tho' the Question, to which they referr, be not recorded by the Evangelist, yet we may easily collect it from what goes before, and from the Answer itself. SERM. I.

NICODEMUS was a Ruler of the *Jews*, and of the Sect of the *Pharisees*,

SERM. I. who were the greateſt Enemies to our SAVIOUR. Notwithſtanding this, having often ſeen our SAVIOUR's Miracles, and heard his Doctrine; he was greatly inclined to believe on him, and to become his Convert. And to this End he went to him by Night, that it might not be known: for none of the Rulers had yet believed on him; at leaſt, they had not openly eſpouſed his Cauſe. For we find afterwards, that *among the chief Rulers many believed on him; but becauſe of the* Phariſees *they did not confeſs him leſt they ſhould be put out of the Synagogue*; according to a former Agreement which the *Jews* had made. So that out of Fear or Shame he came to our SAVIOUR by Night, with a Deſign no doubt to be further inſtructed by him. And he begins his Addreſs to him, with owning that He muſt be an Extraordinary Perſon ſent from GOD, becauſe He produced ſuch good Credentials of his Miſſion. *Rabbi, we know that thou art a Teacher come from* GOD: *for no Man can do theſe Miracles that thou doſt, except* GOD *be with him.* And then follows our SAVIOUR's Anſwer. *Verily, verily,* &c. which

Joh. vii. 48.

—xii. 42.

—ix. 22.

Ver. 2.

which makes it highly probable that *Nicodemus*, having often heard our SAVIOUR preach concerning the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal Life, had enquired of him with the young Man, *What good Thing he ſhould do, that he might have eternal Life?* By what Means he might come to be a Subject of this Heavenly Kingdom, and Partaker of the Privileges which belonged to it. 'Tis highly probable, I ſay, that *Nicodemus*, after he had acknowledged our SAVIOUR to be ſent from GOD, either asked him ſome ſuch Queſtion as this, or was about to do ſo; and our SAVIOUR knowing his Thoughts, returned him this Anſwer, *Except a Man be born again, he cannot ſee the Kingdom of* GOD.

SERM. I.

Matth. xix. 16.

THE *Jews* thought that by Virtue of their being the Children of *Abraham*, to whom the Promiſe of the *Meſſiah* was made, they had a Right to this Kingdom, and, without any more to do, were to be admitted into it, and enjoy the Privileges of it: But our SAVIOUR tells them that much more was neceſſary than all this; that they themſelves as well as others muſt undergo a

SERM. I. great Change, and be very differently formed and fashioned from what they now were, before they could see the Kingdom of GOD, before they could be true Subjects of CHRIST here, or reign with him in his Kingdom hereafter.

THESE Words then contain a general Condition which is required of all Men who embrace Christianity, and which is indeed the whole Sum and Substance of the Gospel, and the chief End and Aim of all those Revelations and Discoveries which our SAVIOUR has made; and that is, being born again, Regeneration, or a new and second Birth.

IN discoursing upon which Subject, I shall

I. BRIEFLY explain the Meaning of this Expression which our SAVIOUR uses, of *being born again*.

II. I SHALL shew how fitly this Expression serves to represent the Thing which our SAVIOUR meant.

III. I

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III. I SHALL conſider the Cauſe of this new or ſecond Birth, the Principle from whence it flows.

IV. I SHALL demonſtrate the Neceſſity of it in order to our ſeeing the Kingdom of GOD. *Except a Man be born again, he cannot ſee the Kingdom of* GOD.

I. LET us enquire what our SAVIOUR here means by this Expreſſion of *being born again.*

THIS is certainly a metaphorical Expreſſion, tho' *Nicodemus* underſtood it in a literal Senſe, and anſwered our SAVIOUR with a particular Regard to his own Caſe, what equally holds of all others, *How can a Man be born when he is old? Can he enter the ſecond Time into his Mother's Womb, and be born?* This to be ſure, in the Nature of the Thing, is impoſſible: And therefore our SAVIOUR, as ſoon as He ſaw how much he miſtook His Meaning, explains Himſelf more fully, and in ſuch a manner as might more eaſily be underſtood. *Jeſus anſwered, verily, verily, I ſay unto*

SERM. I. *unto thee, except a Man be born of Water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of* GOD; i. e. it is not a natural Birth which I mean, but That of Water and the SPIRIT. You muſt be born of Water; you muſt by Baptiſm be admitted into my Religion and become my Diſciple: Nor is this all, but you muſt be born of the SPIRIT too, the Promiſe whereof is Part of my Doctrine; and by whoſe Influence and Operations, they who ſincerely embrace my Religion, become obedient in Heart and Life to thoſe Laws which I deliver, which are ſo Holy and Divine, that they are hated by them whoſe Deeds are evil, who will not be perſuaded to leave their Sins. But as for thoſe who are willing to be my Diſciples, and make uſe of thoſe Aſſiſtances which I am ready to afford them; they not only obey theſe Laws, but take an inward Pleaſure and Satisfaction in ſo doing; and are perfectly new Men in the Diſpoſition of their Hearts, and the Manner of their Lives. 'Tis this figurative Birth, and ſpiritual Change which I am now ſpeaking of.

So that by being born again, is in general to become a Proſelyte to CHRIST, by being baptized, and making good the Profeſſion of Baptiſm, which is to believe in Him, and obey His Commands. SERM. I.

AND therefore our SAVIOUR very juſtly reproves *Nicodemus* for his Ignorance. *Art thou a Maſter in* Iſrael, *and knoweſt not theſe Things?* For this Expreſſion was very common and familiar among the *Jews*, who called their Proſelytes new born Men, and looked upon them to have quitted their Relation to their former Country, Parents, and Kindred; and to have contracted new Relations in every Reſpect. And Waſhing was the Ceremony which they made uſe of in admitting their Proſelytes.

OUR SAVIOUR adds, being born of the SPIRIT too, which ſeveral of the Prophecies relating to the *Meſſiah* did very plainly ſpeak of, mentioning the Operations of the HOLY SPIRIT upon the Hearts of Men, which ſhould then be liberally beſtowed upon the true Diſciples of CHRIST, to make them good and holy Perſons.

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HOWEVER therefore *Nicodemus* came to miſtake our SAVIOUR's Meaning, 'tis very evident from His own explaining Himſelf, that by being born again, He meant becoming His ſincere Proſelyte and Diſciple.

AND how *fitly* this Expreſſion, of *being born again*, ſerves to repreſent one who is become a ſincere Diſciple of CHRIST, and a thorough Convert to His Religion; is the

II. SECOND Thing to be ſhewn. And this will appear if we conſider,

1. THE Greatneſs of this Change. The Chriſtian Doctrine, firmly embraced and believed, produces a very great Alteration in Men, and makes them very different from what they were before. It gives them a new Senſe of Things, and quite other Apprehenſions of Matters then they had; and this naturally gives a new Turn to their Thoughts, and engages them in other Deſigns.

THEIR Underſtandings are enlightened to diſcern their true Intereſt, and are informed with the Knowledge of thoſe great Truths which they are

moſt of all concerned to know, about GOD, and themſelves, and a Life to come. SERM. L.

THIS Knowledge will ſtrongly incline the Will and Affections; And the Belief of the great Truths of the Goſpel, will have ſuch an Effect upon their Minds, as to give them a new Set of Principles, and make them form different Judgments, and have other Sentiments of Things; they cannot then look upon Sin and Wickedneſs to be ſuch harmleſs and innocent Things, but muſt account them, what they really are, moſt pernicious and deteſtable: And from being addicted to Worldlineſs and Senſuality, they will come to love GOD with all their Hearts, and have a juſt Value and true Reliſh for Holineſs and Virtue.

AND this will quickly ſhew itſelf by producing a ſuitable Change in their Lives and Actions. They will think the Time paſt of their Lives ſufficient *to have wrought the Will of the* Gentiles, and will *no longer live the Reſt of their Time in the Fleſh, to the Luſts of Men, but to the Will of* GOD. 1 Pet. iv. 2, 3.

THEY will no longer live after their own Luſts, or the wicked Example of others.

SERM. I. Rom. vi. 19.

others, but walk after the Laws of GOD, and follow the Example of CHRIST. And as they had yielded their *Members Servants to Uncleanneſs and to Iniquity, unto Iniquity; even ſo now* they yield their *Members Servants to Righteouſneſs, unto Holineſs.*

INSTEAD of being covetous and proud, luſtful and revengeful; they are become chaſt and temperate, meek and peaceable. And whereas before, they were ſenſual and worldly, they are now ſpiritual and heavenly, and act after another Rate, have other Deſigns in View, and ſteer a contrary Courſe to what they did before.

IF we conſider theſe Things, and lay them together, we ſhall find ſo great a Change made in our Condition by becoming true Diſciples of CHRIST, that we may fitly be ſaid to be born again, when we are thus differently moulded and faſhioned, that we are no more the ſame Perſons, but transformed into quite other Men then we were. This Change from a State of Sin to a State of Holineſs, may very aptly be reſembled to Regeneration, or a New Birth, becauſe it is an Entrance upon

upon a new Kind or Course of Life, and the Man is wholly changed, created anew, and made over again; so that as to the chief Purpose and Design of his Life, the main bent and Tendency of his Will and Affections, he cannot pass for the same Man he was before. SERM. I.

HENCE is that of the Apostle, 2 *Cor.* v. 17. *Therefore if any Man be in Christ, he is a new Creature.* And *Gal.* vi. 15. *For in Christ Jesus, neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature.* At other Times the Scripture sets forth this Change, by *Repentance from dead Works*, Heb. vi. 1. and *Repentance unto Life*, Acts xi. 18. by *Resurrection from the Dead, and rising to Newness of Life*, Rom. vi. and *putting off concerning the former Conversation, the old Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts, and being renewed in the Spirit of our Minds, and putting on that new Man, which after* GOD *is created in Righteousness, and true Holiness*, Eph. iv. 22, 23, 24.

ALL which, and many more Expressions of the like Nature, import the most

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most thorough and universal Change, which may well be expressed by being born again, because it is entering upon a perfect new Life, such as we never lived before. It is as if we were born over again, and were the Children of another Father; and from being the Children of the Devil whose Works we have done, were become the Children of GOD, and employed ourselves in his Service.

2. OUR becoming the Disciples of CHRIST and effectually embracing His Religion, may very *fitly* be stiled *being born again*, as it puts us into that State which alone can truly and properly deserve the Name of Life.

BARE Existence, or a meer animal Life, is not the Life of a rational Creature. To live, is to be in a good State and Temper of Mind, regular in all our Actions and Practice: To know and see our own Happiness, and pursue those Things which promote it. And therefore while we are ignorant of our true Happiness, or unable to prosecute it; as long as we go on in those Courses whose End is Destruction, in the Paths which lead down to Death,

and

and take hold of Hell; we cannot be said to live, but are dead in the worſt Senſe, and are in a State infinitely worſe than natural and temporal Death. SERM. I.

AND upon this Account it is, that the Scriptures repreſent that ſinful State and Condition we were in before the Coming of our SAVIOUR and the Publication of His Goſpel, under the Notion of Death; and He is ſaid *to quicken us, and raiſe us out of this State*, Eph. ii. 1. *And you hath he quickened who were dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins.* And at the fifth Verſe, *Even when we were dead in Sins He hath quickened us together with Chriſt*; And the ſame Thing is repeated, *Col.* ii. 13. and thoſe ſinful Deeds are frequently ſtiled, *dead Works*, Heb. vi. 1. And to name no more, St. *Paul* calls a lewd and unprofitable Life, which ſerves to no good End or Purpoſe, a Death, rather than a Life; and expreſsly ſays of ſuch an one, *That ſhe is dead, while ſhe liveth*, 1 Tim. v. 6.

THIS then being the Caſe; and the Life which we lived, before we were the Diſciples of CHRIST, and had taken upon us the Profeſſion of His Religion,

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ligion, being Death rather than Life; as our Understandings were darkned, and overrun with Ignorance and Error; our Wills perverse and obstinate; and our Affections depraved and corrupted; we may well be said to be born again, when we were called out of this *Darkness into marvellous Light*: And when *God who commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, shined in our Hearts, to give the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God, in the Face of Jesus Christ*: When our Eyes were opened to discern our true Interest; and we had such strong Motives set before us, such Help and Assistance promised us, as would incline our Wills, and engage our Affections, and turn us from the Power of Satan unto GOD.

1 Pet. ii. 9.
2 Cor. iv. 6.

WHEN we were thus brought to a Sense of Good and Evil, to choose the one and refuse the other: When we were come to a right Use of our Faculties, and were able to discern the Difference of Things, and form suitable Apprehensions of them; then we were born again, and did truly live. And the Life we lived was as different, in a spiritual Sense, from that which we

we lived before; as the Life we lived in our Mother's Womb was, in a natural Senſe, from that which we lived after we were born, and breathed the Air. The one was altogether as imperfect, and as little deſerved the Name of Life as the other. SERM. I.

3. OUR becoming Proſelytes to the Chriſtian Religion, may *properly* be ſtiled a new Birth, as thereby we contracted new Relations, and gained great Advantages, which before we had nothing to do with.

BY Sin and Wickedneſs we had forfeited our Title to Heaven and Happineſs, and incurred the Sentence of Death. We were come ſhort of the Glory of GOD, of that glorious State which He at firſt deſigned us for; and were at Enmity with Him, and in Alienation from Him.

THUS the Apoſtle deſcribes our Caſe, *That at that Time ye were without Chriſt, being Aliens from the Commonwealth of* Iſrael, *and Strangers from the Covenant of Promiſe, having no Hope, and without God in the World.* And in the Fifth Chapter to the *Romans*, we are called *Enemies to God.* Eph. ii. 12.

For

SERM. L. For the Revolt was universal, and both *Jew* and *Gentile* were become guilty before GOD, and had forfeited his Favour and Protection: *But now in Christ Jesus*, as the Apostle goes on, *ver.* 13. *ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the Blood of Jesus.* Ver. 18, 19. *For through him we both* (both *Jew* and *Gentile*) *have an Access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more Strangers and Foreigners, but Fellow-Citizens with the Saints, and of the Houshold of God.*

BY embracing the Gospel, we are taken into a new and near Relation to GOD, and have great Privileges and Immunities belonging to us in the Heavenly Kingdom. We are the Sons of GOD, and Heirs with CHRIST; we are of Kin to the Family of GOD, and Brethren to His Children in Heaven, and on Earth. We enjoy his Favour and Blessing, and have an actual Right to that Promise which he hath promised, even Eternal Life.

HE *who heareth my Word* (saith our SAVIOUR) *and believeth on Him who sent me, hath Everlasting Life, and*

and ſhall not come into Condemnation, but is paſſed from Death unto Life. And again, the Evangeliſt ſpeaking of our SAVIOUR, ſays, *He came unto his own, and his own received Him not. But as many as received Him*, i. e. believed on His Name, believed Him to be the promiſed *Meſſiah*, as appears by the Oppoſition in the Verſe before; *to them gave He Power*, (Right or Privilege) *to become Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name.*

SERM. I.

John v. 24.

John i. 12, 13.

AND ſince we acquire this high Relation, and are inveſted with this great Priviledge, by taking upon us the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, This may well be ſtiled a new Birth, as we are hereby poſſeſſed of new Powers and Advantages, and have as it were a new Being given us, by truly believing in JESUS CHRIST, and conforming ourſelves to His Holy Doctrine and Example. Hence we are ſaid to be *begotten again unto a lively Hope, through the Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the Dead.* He is the Foundation of all our Hopes and Expectations. Our Original Right to GOD's Favour, which we had as His Creatures and as the

1 Pet. i. 3.

SERM. I. Work of Hands, we have long ſince forfeited by our Diſobedience and Rebellion againſt Him; and our preſent Title is wholly new, aud owing to what our SAVIOUR has done for us; and 'tis by embracing Him and His Religion, that we are born again, and taken into a new Relation to GOD. To this Spiritual Birth, we owe our Relation to GOD, and our Title to Heaven, as much as any Man does his Relations according to the Fleſh, and his ſecular Honours and Titles, to his natural Birth.

4. THE laſt Reaſon I ſhall give why our SAVIOUR expreſſes our becoming His Diſciples, and heartily embracing His Goſpel, by *being born again*; is, becauſe this Second or Spiritual Birth, is effected by a Divine Power of the ſame Kind with that which firſt brought us into Being.

OUR Creation and Redemption are thus far alike, that they are both the Work of a Divine Power; and therefore the latter may not improperly be ſtiled, as it is, a new Creation; and we be called new Creatures, and repreſented as having had a Second Birth.

AT

SERM. I.

AT the first Creation of the World, the SPIRIT of GOD moved upon the Face of the Waters, and was concerned in the Formation of Man; and in the second Creation or Redemption of the World, the same SPIRIT moves in Mens Hearts, and inclines them to hearken to and and comply with those gracious Terms of Reconciliation which were offered to the World. And the Scripture compares these two together, and, when it speaks of the latter, frequently alludes to the former. Thus in the Place before cited, 2 *Cor.* iv. 6. *God who commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, hath shined in our Hearts.* And St. *John* speaking of those who believed on our SAVIOUR, says, *They were born, not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God,* i. e. it was not by any Strength of their own, or any natural Strength, that they had this Power of becoming Sons of GOD by believing on our SAVIOUR, but by the Power of the Divine Grace, and the SPIRIT of GOD.

THE same Power which first formed Man out of the Dust of the Earth,

SERM. I.

and when he is returned to Duſt, will raiſe Him out of it again, does create us again unto Good Works, and faſhion us after the Image of Him who firſt created us, in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs. *For if the Spirit of Him that raiſed Jeſus from the Dead, dwell in you; He that raiſed up Chriſt from the Dead, ſhall quicken your mortal Bodies* (that is, from dead Works now, and hereafter from Death itſelf) *by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

Rom. viii. 11.

So that our Converſion to the Faith of CHRIST, and becoming His true Diſciples, being, in a peculiar Manner, the Work of that SPIRIT, to which the Creation is aſcribed; may fitly be called our Regeneration, or *being born again.* But this falls in with the

III. THIRD Thing to be conſidered, *viz.* The *Efficient Cauſe* of this New or Second Birth, and the Principle from whence it flows.

AND this our SAVIOUR has told us in thoſe Words where He explains the Text, *Except a Man be born of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.*

Ver. 5.

WHETHER

WHETHER one or two Cauſes be here meant, is not generally agreed on. Some think, that (by an ordinary Figure) Water and the Spirit ſignify no more than the SPIRIT itſelf, which is often repreſented by Water, as it is by Fire, to intimate its cleanſing and purifying Quality: And then this Expreſſion of *being born of Water and the Spirit*, will be parallel to that of *being baptized with the Holy Ghoſt, and with Fire*, Matth. iii. 11. where nothing more is meant than the HOLY GHOST, and Fire is only uſed as a fit Emblem of it. SERM. I.

HOWEVER; it ſeems more probable that our SAVIOUR here ſpeaks of Baptiſm, becauſe that was a Ceremony of admitting Proſelytes which he borrowed from the *Jews*; And for that Reaſon He may well be ſuppoſed to chooſe to expreſs the Method of becoming a Convert to Him, by Baptiſm, when He was diſcourſing with a *Jew*; and might well wonder, as He does, that His Meaning ſhould not be underſtood.

ADD to this, that St. *Paul* expreſsly calls Baptiſm *the Waſhing of Regeneration*, Tit. iii. 5.

SERM. I. *tion*, which does not differ much from *being born again of Water*; and is certainly uſed to ſignify the Means whereby we are regenerated, and become the Diſciples of CHRIST. But I ſhall not contend for this Interpretation, becauſe the principal Agent or Inſtrument of this New Birth is the HOLY GHOST, the Holy Spirit of GOD. And though This be not always the immediate Cauſe of our Regeneration and becoming Chriſtians, yet it is that which makes all other Means effectual, and by whoſe Influences and Operations it is, that the Doctrines and Motives of the Goſpel have their due Force upon us and prevail with us to comply with them, which is very evident from many plain Paſſages of Scripture; ſo that the SPIRIT is the principal Cauſe of this Effect.

AND whether Baptiſm be here expreſsly mentioned or no, it is to be obſerved, that That is a Fœderal Rite inſtituted by GOD, and, in the due and right Uſe of it, we ſhall receive this HOLY SPIRIT; For this is the Means appointed by GOD for the obtaining it, and it is not ordinarily conferred without the Uſe of this Means; and

and this is the Reaſon why Baptiſm and the Gift of the HOLY SPIRIT are ſo often joined together in Scripture. Thus in the Place laſt cited, *He ſaved us by the Waſhing of Regeneration, and Renewing of the Holy Ghoſt.* And St. *Peter* in his Diſcourſe which he made to the *Jews*, juſt after the Deſcent of the HOLY GHOST upon the Apoſtles; *Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the Remiſſion of Sins, and ye ſhall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt.* And ſo again in that remarkable Place, *Heb.* vi. 4; *It is impoſſible*, i. e. extreamly difficult, *for thoſe who were once enlightened*, i. e. baptized; Baptiſm being ſtiled by the Ancients, *Illumination*, becauſe in it they were enlightened by the HOLY GHOST: *It is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightened, and have taſted of the Heavenly Gift, and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghoſt.* ——— SERM. I. Acts ii. 38.

WHERE we ſee the HOLY GHOST immediately follows Baptiſm, and is conferred therein.

SO that Baptiſm is the Means ordained by GOD for obtaining this

SERM. I. HOLY SPIRIT; but it is the SPIRIT itſelf which renders all the other Means we make uſe of, in order to become ſincere Diſciples, and heartily embrace the Goſpel, effectual and ſucceſsful. This Second Birth is owing to his Aſſiſtance, to his kind Influence and Operations. And the Scripture continually aſcribes all the Steps we make towards becoming true Diſciples of CHRIST, and conforming ourſelves to His Doctrine and Example, to the Grace which we receive from GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT. This is the conſtant Language of the Sacred Writings, and is ſo apparent throughout the whole *New Teſtament*, particularly the Epiſtles, that I ſhall not enter upon a diſtinct Proof of it. All that I ſhall farther obſerve under this Head, is, that though our Second Birth or Regeneration be the Work of this HOLY SPIRIT, which is an Almighty Agent; yet we muſt not, and indeed cannot infer, either from the Cauſe of this New Birth, or the Metaphorical Expreſſion itſelf, that it is wrought in us by an irreſiſtible Force; that we are purely paſſive under it, and contribute nothing towards

it;

it; that the Buſineſs is done in an Inſtant, and we are wholly ignorant of the Meaſures and Steps that are taken in it. SERM. I.

THESE and ſuch like Notions are directly contrary to the whole Tenor of the Goſpel. They make all the Exhortations and Threatnings which we there meet with, vain and inſignificant; and tend to the utter Diſcouragement of all Endeavours after Piety and Virtue. And they do as evidently contradict Scripture, Reaſon, and common Experience: All which abundantly teſtify that the Grace of GOD, and thoſe good Motions which are ſtirred up in us, may be, and frequently are, neglected, refuſed, and reſiſted: That Men muſt do ſomething themſelves to overcome Temptations, and conquer vicious Cuſtoms, and acquire firm and ſettled Habits of Piety and Virtue: And that this is a Work which cannot be done in an Inſtant, but requires Time, as well as Pains, and is by Degrees carried on and brought to ſome Perfection: That as Men do not come to a great Pitch of Wickedneſs all on a ſudden, ſo neither do they,

in

SERM. I. in an Inſtant, become extraordinarily good and virtuous, but grow in Grace, and proceed from one Degree of Holineſs to another.

NOR can there be any Reaſon given why this ſhould not be the Caſe, either from the Metaphor which our SAVIOUR uſes to expreſs it, or from the Nature of that HOLY SPIRIT which effects it.

AS to the Metaphorical Expreſſion of *being born again*, I have already accounted for it, and ſhown how properly it repreſents what our SAVIOUR deſigned by it: And Metaphors are not to be ſtrained to all thoſe Similitudes, which a lively Fancy and quick Apprehenſion may find out, and deduce from them. At this Rate there would be no Point ſo abſurd, but might with ſome Colour be maintained and defended. It is abundantly ſufficient that the Metaphor holds in the main, and is true in the firſt and moſt obvious Senſe. Thus in the Caſe before us; when the Change which Chriſtianity makes in us, is repreſented by a New Birth, by our *being born again*; the great Change and Alteration, which,

by

by the Power of GOD's Grace, is wrought in the Hearts of Men, is ſufficient to juſtify the Uſe of the Metaphor. But there is no manner of Reaſon, nor any Colour of an Argument to be drawn from hence, that this new Change muſt in all other Reſpects anſwer the Work of Creation; becauſe it was never uſed with that Intent, and is plainly falſe, and inconſiſtent with other Truths, when 'tis ſo applied. And as to the SPIRIT's being an Almighty Agent, That is no Argument why it muſt always exert its utmoſt Power; and if it did ſo in the preſent Caſe, it would deſtroy both our natural Freedom, and the Virtue of our beſt Actions. But I proceed to the

SERM. I.

IV. FOURTH Thing I propoſed; which was to demonſtrate the Neceſſity of this great Change, this New and Second Birth, in order to our ſeeing the Kingdom of GOD. *Except a Man be born again, he cannot ſee the Kingdom of God.*

AND this will appear, whether we conſider our *being born again*,

1. As

SERM. I. 1. As it contains the expreſs Condition, and poſitive Terms of the Goſpel Covenant; or,

2. As it makes the beſt Reparation and Amends that can be for the Diſhonour we have done to GOD, and the Contempt we have ſhewn of his Holy Laws. Or,

3. As it is in the Nature of the Thing itſelf a neceſſary Qualification for the Kingdom of Heaven.

1. OUR *being born again* contains the expreſs Condition, and poſitive Terms of the Goſpel Covenant.

BY *being born again*, is meant, as has been ſhewn, becoming a ſincere Diſciple of CHRIST, and heartily embracing His Goſpel, which will produce a thorough Change and Reformation in us, a Renovation of our Hearts and Minds, ſo that we ſhall become other Men, and very different from what we were before, both in our inward Affections and Diſpoſitions, and our outward Works and Actions.

THIS is *being born again*; and tho' it be variouſly expreſſed and differently deſcribed in Scripture, yet ſtill the ſame Thing is meant, and made an indiſpenſable

indiſpenſable Condition of our obtaining Forgiveneſs of Sins, being received into Grace or Favour with GOD, and entitled to Eternal Life. SERM. I.

THUS 'tis ſometimes ſet forth under the Notion of Repentance, *Acts* iii. 19. *Repent, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out:* And xxvi. 20. that they ſhould *repent, and turn to God, and do Works meet for Repentance.* And nothing is more common than for the Whole of the Goſpel to be deſcribed by Repentance. This was the Meſſage of *John the Baptiſt*, to call Men to Repentance. Our SAVIOUR preached the ſame Doctrine; and when He ſent forth His Apoſtles, they went out and preached that Men ſhould repent. And what is Repentance but ſuch a Change of Mind and Life as we have been now treating of, and which the Text expreſſes by *being born again*, and makes neceſſary in order to our ſeeing the Kingdom of GOD, as Repentance certainly is? The ſame Thing is likewiſe expreſſed by Sanctification; Thus, 1 *Cor.* vi. 9, &c. the Apoſtle enumerates ſeveral Sins, which the *Corinthians*, before their Converſion, were guilty of, and which will

SERM. I. will certainly exclude all, who allow themſelves in them, from the Favour and Kingdom of GOD. *Know ye not that the Unrighteous ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners ſhall inherit the Kingdom of God. And ſuch were ſome of you: But ye are waſhed; but ye are ſanctified, but ye are juſtified, in the Name of the Lord Jeſus, and by the Spirit of our God.* And ſo St. *James* iv. 8. *Cleanſe your Hands ye Sinners, and purify your Hearts, ye Double-minded.* Where there is the ſame Streſs laid upon this Sanctification and Purification, as there is upon our *being born again*; and it is made a Condition of our being received into the Favour of GOD, and reckoned among his Children. As the ſame Apoſtle has plainly expreſſed it, 2 *Cor.* vi. 17, 18. *Touch not the Unclean Thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye ſhall be my Sons and Daughters, ſaith the Lord Almighty*; And then it follows, *Chap.* vii. 1. *Having therefore*

theſe

these Promises, dearly Beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God. Having this Encouragement, that upon these Conditions we shall be accepted, let us set about this Work. SERM. I.

IT were easy to shew the same Thing of many other Passages of Scripture, where the Terms of our Justification, and the Conditions of Eternal Life are described. For however differently these may be expressed, they do all amount to the same Thing; and either immediately, or by Consequence, mean the same with this Regeneration or New Birth.

2. BEING *born again*, is a necessary Condition of our seeing the Kingdom of GOD, as it makes the best Reparation that can be for the Dishonour we have done to GOD, and the Contempt we have shown of His Holy Laws.

GOD created us at first after his own Image and Likeness, and designed that we should preserve and improve that Image and Likeness, by a Life of Religion and Virtue; by imitating and transcribing His Perfections, and observing

SERM. L. ſerving thoſe Eternal Rules of Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs, and Truth, which He loves, and obſerves Himſelf, and has given ſo many Teſtimonies of His Approving in others. But we have ſtrangely deviated from this Original Deſign of our Creation; and by Sin and Wickedneſs, have greatly corrupted and depraved our Natures, defaced GOD's Image, and tranſgreſſed His Righteous Laws. And what other Recompence can we make for this Diſhonour done to GOD, and Contempt of His Authority; but *being born again*, reſtoring ourſelves to the Divine Image and Likeneſs, and, by a thorough Change in the Tempers of our Minds, and the Actions of our Lives, to bring ourſelves both to do, and delight in, Works of univerſal Righteouſneſs and Holineſs?

To bring us back again to this State, is the Deſign of the Goſpel Diſpenſation, and the Meaning of this New Creation and Second Birth. Thus the Apoſtle tells us, *Eph.* ii. 10. *For we are His Workmanſhip created in Chriſt Jeſus unto Good Works, which God hath before ordained that we ſhould walk*

walk in. It was his Original Intention in creating us; and which, when we had defeated, He ſtill purſued in Redeeming us. And if we refuſe to come in, and comply with this Deſign, by uſing all thoſe Helps which He has now afforded us, of creating in us a New Heart and renewing a right Spirit, of recovering ourſelves out of our degenerate State, and forming ourſelves anew after the Image of GOD in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs: I ſay, without this Change of Heart and Life, GOD will never receive us into His Favour, nor reward us with Eternal Glory and Happineſs. This would be inconſiſtent with His Honour and His Holineſs; and hereby He would give the World no ſufficient Teſtimony of His Love of Righteouſneſs, and His Hatred of Sin and Iniquity, but would rather ſhow an Indifferency whether Men were good and virtuous or not. SERM. I.

3. OUR being regenerated and born again, is, in the Nature of the Thing itſelf, a neceſſary Qualification for our ſeeing the Kingdom of GOD.

WHEN GOD created us at firſt, He created us, no doubt, with a Deſign to

SERM. I. make us happy, and therefore he made us after His own Image and Likeneſs; He being the Original Standard of all Perfection and Happineſs, and it being impoſſible to be happy in the Enjoyment of Him but by reſembling Him.

AND what is it wherein we can reſemble GOD who is a Spirit, but in the Spirit of our Minds? In conforming ourſelves to His Temper and Diſpoſition, to the Holineſs and Purity of His Nature? This is the only Way whereby we can come to be like GOD, and capable of the Enjoyment of Him. For all Enjoyment, all delightful Communion, and agreeable Society, is founded in the Similitude and Agreement of Diſpoſitions and Manners: And as long as we are unlike GOD in the Frame, Temper and Diſpoſition of our Minds (which is evidently the Caſe of all wicked Men,) ſo long we are utterly incapable of ſeeing and enjoying Him. While we continue in Sin and Wickedneſs, we are plainly unlike GOD in the Bent and Tendency of our Affections, and in the Courſe of our Lives and Actions, ſo that we can neither

neither Rejoice nor take Pleaſure in Him, nor He in us: But there will be ſuch a Diſcord and Diſagreement between us, as will for ever keep us at a Diſtance, and hinder us from holding any comfortable Communion with him. SERM. I.

AND this being the Caſe, and the preſent Corruption and Degeneracy of our Nature being ſuch as it is, and ſo unlike to that which it was from the Beginning, when it came out of the Hands of GOD; the great Neceſſity of this Spiritual Regeneration, or New Birth, is very apparent; ſince this is the only Way of bringing ourſelves up again to that Divine Temper and Likeneſs, from which by Tranſgreſſion we fell.

THAT *which is born of the Fleſh is Fleſh*; this is our natural State and Condition, nor ſhall we ever get any higher by our natural Strength. *But that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.* 'Tis by the Power of the Divine SPIRIT derived to us from above, that we are born again, by a Spiritual Regeneration.

SERM. I.

1 Cor. xv. 48, 49.

As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly: And as we have born the Image of the earthy, so we must also bear the Image of the heavenly.

'TIS this that must recommend us to the Favour of GOD, this real Renovation of our Hearts and Lives after the Image of Him that created us. This Image we must repair and recover, before we can be restored to the Divine Grace and Favour, and be capable of the Reward of Eternal Life.

AND thus I have finished what at first I proposed. I have explained these Words of our SAVIOUR; and shown you how fitly this Metaphor of *being born again* represents our SAVIOUR's Meaning. I have shown you how this New Birth is effected in us, and to what Principle it is owing; and have laid before you the Necessity of it in order to our seeing the Kingdom of GOD.

ALL that remains, is, briefly to shew what Use is to be made of the foregoing Doctrine; and this I shall do in two

two or three Particulars, which I shall but just mention. And SERM. I.

First, WHAT has been said may serve in some Measure to make us sensible of our own Deformity, of the great and general Corruption and Degeneracy of our Natures, and how much we are fallen from our original Integrity. We were created perfect and upright, and the End of our Creation was the Glory of GOD, and our own Happiness. For this End we are every Way well fitted and qualified; and by a right Use of our Faculties, and a due Improvement of ourselves, and the Talents committed to us, we might certainly have attained it. But instead of this, by a careless Neglect, and gross Abuse of ourselves, we departed from the right Way, and fell into Sin and Folly, and sunk by Degrees into such a miserably corrupt and wicked State, that we were unable to pursue the original End of our Creation, and uncapable of that Happiness which at first we were designed for, till the SPIRIT of GOD had formed and fashioned us anew, and wrought such a Change in us, as is answerable to a New Birth.

SERM. I.

AND this, when we reflect upon it, cannot fail to fill us with Shame, Sorrow, and Confusion.

Secondly, THE Consideration of what has been said, affords us great Matter of Joy and Thankſgiving towards GOD, that He ſhould take Pity on us in that miſerable State, which, by our own Sin and Folly, we had brought ourſelves into; and ſend His HOLY SPIRIT to raiſe us to a new Life, and enable us to recover our Steps into the right Way, and order our Goings in the Paths that lead to Eternal Life. And therefore

Thirdly, HENCE it appears what great Reaſon we have, often to think of this happy Alteration of our State, and to remember the Day of our Baptiſm with greater Joy and Gladneſs than the Day of our Birth.

BY our being regenerated and born again, we are ſo much altered for the better, as if we had never been before; and the Advantages we gain by it, ſo much beyond thoſe which accrue to us by our natural Birth; that we have great Reaſon to eſteem it the greateſt Bleſſing that ever befell us, and to

note

note it down as the happiest Circumstance of our Lives. SERM. I.

OUR natural Birth entitles us to many worldly Privileges and Advantages, and is indeed the Foundation of all our Enjoyments in this Life. But what is there in all this, which can compare with those glorious Privileges, and truly valuable Titles, of being Sons of GOD and Heirs of Heaven; of having an Eternal Inheritance, and an Immortal Crown of Glory?

Fourthly and *Lastly*, FROM the Whole it appears what great Diligence and Application is necessary to carry on this great Work; and how careful we should be, lest through our own Fault it miscarry.

FOR though it be the Work of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT, yet this does by no Means exclude our own Endeavours. It is indeed a great Encouragement to us, that we have such a Help at Hand to go along with us, and assist us in this Work; but we ourselves must work together with it; For it is upon our making Use of the Assistance of this HOLY SPIRIT, that the Promise of it depends. Both the Con-

SERM. I.

tinuance and Increaſe of this Divine Help, depends upon our uſing it; *For to him that hath, more ſhall be given; and from him that hath not, ſhall be taken away even that which he ſeemeth to have.*

So that here is no Encouragement given to Careleſsneſs and Security. The Apoſtle draws a direct contrary Inference from it, *Phil.* ii. 12, 13. *Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of His Good Pleaſure.*

THIS then being the Caſe, and our own Labour and Endeavours being neceſſary to carry on this Work; what a Madneſs is it in Men to defer this great Buſineſs to Old-Age and the End of our Lives; for of all ſuch Perſons *Nicodemus*'s Queſtion may very properly be asked, *How can a Man be born when he is old?* How can a Man form and faſhion himſelf over again, and renew his Heart and Mind; when he is grown old in Sin, and vicious Habits have long had the Dominion over him? When his Strength is decayed, and all his Powers and Faculties are weakened

and benummed, and he can ſcarce ſuſtain the Infirmities of Age? Is this a Time to fight againſt Principalities and Powers, and pull down the Strong-holds of Satan, and exert himſelf for the Recovery of his Liberty, and free himſelf from the Tyranny of Sin. SERM. I.

No; This is a Work which requires more Time and Strength, than can uſually be hoped for at that Seaſon. And therefore we muſt take Care to enter upon this Buſineſs betimes, and be continually making ſome Progreſs in it, to renew ourſelves Day by Day, and endeavour to become every Day better than other; And thus by the Aſſiſtance of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT, we ſhall recover ourſelves out of this State of Sin and Corruption, and be brought forth into the Glorious Liberty of the Sons of GOD.

SERM. II.

1 PET. ii. 11.

Dearly Beloved, I beſeech you as Strangers and Pilgrims, abſtain from fleſhly Luſts, which war againſt the Soul.

THE Apoſtle's Deſign in this and the foregoing Chapter, is to inculcate upon the *Jewiſh* Converts, the great Obligations they lay under to Purity and Holineſs of Life, from their Converſion to Chriſtianity.

THAT *ſince they were called out of Darkneſs into marvellous Light*, Ver. 9. *Since they, who in Time paſt were not a People, were now the People of God; they who had not obtained Mercy, but now*

SERM. II. *now obtained Mercy*, Ver. 10: they ſhould ſhew forth the Praiſes of Him that called them, by walking worthy of their Vocation, and leading ſuch Lives as would beſt anſwer the Dignity of their Profeſſion, and the Divine Goodneſs by which they had been thus highly exalted.

AND ſince there was nothing ſo unbecoming them, and diſagreeable to that Change they had made, and which would prove ſo dangerous to the Intereſt they had now embraced, as thoſe Luſts which they formerly indulged, and which their unconverted Brethren ſtill walked in: He begins his Exhortation with warning them againſt this ſubtle and dangerous Enemy, *Chap.* i. 13, 14. *Wherefore gird up the Loyns of your Mind; be ſober, and hope to the End, for the* [Grace that is to be brought to you at the] *Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt; as obedient Children, not faſhioning yourſelves according to the former Luſts in your Ignorance: But as He which hath called you is Holy, ſo be ye holy in all manner of Converſation.*

AND to the ſame Purpoſe he applies himſelf to them in the Text, and that in

in the moſt affectionate manner. *Dearly Beloved, I beſeech you, as Strangers and Pilgrims, abſtain from fleſhly Luſts, which war againſt the Soul.* Which Words contain an earneſt Diſſuaſive from indulging fleſhly Luſts. And becauſe theſe fleſhly Luſts [which the Apoſtle would have them abſtain from] are what the corrupt Nature of Man is ſtrongly inclined to, and the World and the Devil will be continually tempting and ſoliciting us to comply with; He introduces what he has to ſay by the moſt endearing Compellation, that by ſuch mild and gentle Words he might firſt inſinuate himſelf into their Affections, and more eaſily prevail with them to hearken to thoſe Reaſons which he had afterwards to offer to perſuade them to follow his Advice. SERM. II.

THE Word, which we tranſlate *Dearly Beloved*, is but one in the Original; but becauſe of the ſpecial Emphaſis of it, 'tis fitly thus rendered. 'Tis uſually applied to an only Child, and denotes the moſt cordial and diſintereſted Love, the deareſt and moſt intimate Affection. And thereby the Apoſtle would let them ſee, that the Reaſon why

SERM. II. why he was thus earneſt with them, was nothing elſe but a ſincere Deſire of their Eternal Welfare; and that, in order to this, it was abſolutely neceſſary to abſtain from theſe fleſhly Luſts.

IN ſpeaking to theſe Words, I ſhall

I. BRIEFLY enquire, What the Apoſtle here means by *fleſhly Luſts*.

II. I WILL ſhow how far we are obliged to abſtain from them.

III. I WILL explain the Force of thoſe Arguments the Apoſtle uſes, to perſuade us thus to abſtain. Which when I have done, I hope in the

IV. AND laſt Place, to find Room for a Word of Exhortation.

I. To begin with the Firſt; and briefly to enquire, What the Apoſtle here means by *fleſhly Luſts*.

NOW by theſe fleſhly Luſts, or Luſts of the Fleſh, we may underſtand all thoſe Appetites and Deſires by which we are carried out to a Love of the Creature,

Creature, and inclined to the Deſire and Enjoyment of ſenſible and corporeal Things. SERM. II.

NOT only thoſe which in a groſs and literal Senſe are Luſts of the Fleſh, and Sins againſt the Seventh Commandment; but all other eager Purſuits and Longings after the World, and the Things that are in the World, *the Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life*; as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, 1 *John* ii. 16. diſtributing the irregular Appetites of Men into three Kinds, Voluptuouſneſs, Covetouſneſs and Ambition; anſwerably to the three Sorts of tempting Objects that are in the World, Pleaſures, Riches and Honours.

AND accordingly we find the Fleſh taken in this Latitude, *Gal.* v. 19, &c. where the Apoſtle gives us a Liſt of the Works of the Fleſh, *Now the Works of the Fleſh are manifeſt, which are theſe, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Laſciviouſneſs, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Hereſies, Envyings, Murthers, Drunkenneſs, Revellings, and ſuch like.* And therefore by fleſhly Luſts

SERM. II. Luſts we are to underſtand in general all thoſe irregular Appetites, corrupt Inclinations and vitious Habitudes, whereby we are turned from our Obedience to that Eternal Law of Right, which God requires us to obſerve.

IN this Senſe the Word Fleſh is frequently uſed in the Epiſtles, for that Principle from whence all inordinate Deſires and ſinful Actions ſpring: That bodily State, or State of Conjunction of Soul and Body, which is the Source from whence all our Deviations from the ſtreight Rule principally take their Riſe, or ultimately terminate in; and which is often oppoſed to the Spirit, the Dictates of right Reaſon improved and aſſiſted by the Grace of GOD, which enables us to know, and inclines us to do what is right and good.

THESE two Principles we many times meet with in Scripture oppoſed to one another under the Titles of Fleſh and Spirit. Thus in the Chapter juſt now cited, *Ver.* 26, &c. *This I ſay then, walk in the Spirit, and ye ſhall not fulfil the Luſts of the Fleſh. For the Fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the Fleſh: And theſe are contrary*

trary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the Things that ye would. SERM. II.

THESE fleshly Lusts then, taken in this Latitude, are not simply, and in themselves unlawful. The Word which we render Lust, signifies no more than any natural Desire; and though the Epithet added to it, is often taken in an ill Sense, yet it does not necessarily imply any Ill. For even our innocent Desires may in some Sense be stiled fleshly, as they are commonly reputed to spring from the fleshly and inferior Part of us, as their proper Seat.

AND they were originally planted in us by the Wise Author of our Beings, and serve to many wise Ends and Purposes.

AND therefore we are not enjoined totally to stifle and suppress them. This is impossible; because they necessarily result from our Frame and Constitution, and the Principles of our Creation; and are the natural Effect of the Union between Soul and Body.

WE may therefore, and must comply with them, as far as they serve the Ends for which they are designed, the Preservation of Life and Health,

SERM. II. and the innocent Comforts and Conveniences of Life.

THUS far we may lawfully love them, and cannot poſſibly hate them: Eph. v. 29. *For no Man ever yet hated his own Fleſh.*

ALL the Difficulty lies, in diſtinguiſhing between natural and regular Deſires, and thoſe which are unnatural and inordinate; that we may know *when* theſe fleſhly Luſts become criminal, ſuch as the Apoſtle condemns, and enjoins us to abſtain from as hurtful and prejudicial to our Souls. And this is what in the

II. SECOND Place, I ſhall endeavour to ſtate.

1. THEN, theſe fleſhly-Luſts become criminal, and are to be abſtained from, when they exceed thoſe natural Bounds which belong to them, and go not only beſide but beyond the Mark which they ought to aim at. When they are irregular as to the Manner, and inordinate as to the Meaſure and Degree.

WHEN, for inſtance, the natural Care of the Body, and the true Ends of thoſe Refreſhments and Recreations we take, which are the Preſervation of Life and

Health and rendering the Body a fit Inſtrument for the Soul, are turned into Luxury and Intemperance, Softneſs and Senſuality, and prove the Ruin both of Body and Soul, by impairing the Strength of the one, and weakening the Authority of the other, and giving the Rule to that which ought to obey. SERM. II.

WHEN, inſtead of maintaining *Good Works for neceſſary Uſes*, Tit. iii. 14. and providing *Things honeſt in the Sight of all Men*, Rom. xii. 17. *we make Proviſion for the Fleſh to fulfil the Luſts thereof*; and are ſo eagerly intent upon Riches, that we have no Regard to the Manner of acquiring them, or any Uſe which is afterwards to be made of them; but, inſtead of ſuch a Competency as may enable us to go on cheerfully in our Duty, and attend upon the LORD without Diſtraction; we give ourſelves up entirely to a greedy Purſuit after Gain, and diſtract ourſelves with worldly Cares and Fears, *and make Silver our Hope, and fine Gold our Confidence.* Job xxxi. 24.

THIS inevitably involves us in Sin and Miſery: For as the Apoſtle obſerves, *They that will be rich, fall into Temptation,* 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

SERM. II. *tation, and a Snare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful Luſts, which drown Men in Deſtruction and Perdition. For the Love of Money is the Root of all Evil, which while ſome have coveted after, they have erred from the Faith, and pierced themſelves through with many Sorrows; but thou, O Man of God, flee theſe Things.*

AND ſo again, for Honour and Reputation. Then the Deſire of theſe becomes criminal, when inſtead of that juſt and tender Regard which every Man ought to have for his own Credit, and for the Credit of the Religion he profeſſes, and for the Sake of doing the more Good in the World; we become ambitious, and deſirous of Vain-glory, provoking one another, and envying one another.

WHEN we calculate our Actions for popular Honour and Applauſe, and love the Praiſe of Men more than the Praiſe of GOD. And inſtead of contending after the Things that are excellent, and ſeeking to excel, to the edifying one another, and diſtinguiſhing ourſelves by real Goodneſs; we fall into Emulations, Strifes, Seditions, Hereſies, &c.

THESE

THESE are thoſe Works of the Fleſh, which the Apoſtle condemns, *Gal.* v. and aſſures us, That *they who do ſuch Things ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* SERM. II.

AND therefore when our fleſhly Deſires lead us on to ſuch Works as theſe, it is high Time to abſtain, and, as the ſame Apoſtle adviſes, *Col.* iii. 5. *to mortify our Members which are upon the Earth, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, inordinate Affection, evil Concupiſcence, and Covetouſneſs, which is Idolatry.*

BUT this is not all; There is ſomething more intended in this Precept of abſtaining from fleſhly Luſts, than abſtaining from ſuch groſs Works of the Fleſh as are great and notorious Sins.

MUCH Abſtinence muſt be uſed even in lawful and allowable Inſtances, to keep them from being hurtful and prejudicial to us. We muſt not make the innocent Satisfactions of our carnal Appetites, the Joy and Contentment, the Deſire and Delight of our Souls; the Things which our Hearts love and long for; and which we are willing to be always employed in, at leaſt to repeat as often as we can find any Pleaſure in

SERM. II. ſuch Repetitions. This is properly to follow after the Luſts of the Fleſh, to ſeek ſenſual Pleaſure and enſue it, and is wholly inconſiſtent with the Abſtinence here enjoined us.

AND therefore by abſtaining from fleſhly Luſts, we are to underſtand

2. KEEPING at a due Diſtance from them, without an Over-reliſh of them, or giving ourſelves up entirely to their Enjoyment: Not to be ſo tranſported, or captivated with the Love of any Creature, as not to be able to enjoy ourſelves, and be content and happy without it; but to maintain ſuch an Indifferency for all theſe Things, that our Soul may never cleave ſo cloſely to this Duſt, as not to be able to exert its native Freedom, and raiſe itſelf above this lower World.

AND this is ſo much the more neceſſary to be noted, becauſe Men are not apt to apprehend any Danger from theſe fleſhly Luſts, as long as they keep them from breaking out into groſs Enormities.

THAT, for inſtance, there is no Harm in the Love of Riches, if they do not love them ſo well as to have Recourſe

to

to unlawful Ways of procuring them, and be guilty of Fraud or Oppression. SERM. II.

THAT Pleasure is very innocent, when it exceeds not the Bounds of Temperance and Sobriety, and does not run into Gluttony and Excess.

THAT a Desire of being well spoken of, and well thought of, by others, is not only allowable, but commendable; and that there is no Danger in it, as long as we do not undermine the Reputation of others to raise our own; and blast their Credit, that ours may flourish the more. I say, Men are apt to imagine themselves safe and secure from being hurt by these fleshly Lusts, as long as they keep them under these and such like Restraints.

AND yet 'tis certain, that more is required of a Christian, and enjoined here by the Apostle, than This. This is but a Negative Part of Holiness at most. It cannot indeed be said of such an one, that he is a wicked and vicious Man; nor can it be said, that he is holy, devout and religious. To this it is necessary not only that we do not pursue the World by indirect Means, but that we do not pursue it with great Eagerness

SERM. II. and Impatience; that we ſit looſe from it, and live above it. That we not only deny the irregular and inordinate Luſts of the Fleſh, but that we ſet Bounds to our natural Inclinations and lawful Appetites.

FOR our natural Affections may by Degrees entangle and enſnare us, as well as unlawful and irregular ones; if we lay no Reſtraint upon them.

AND therefore great Care muſt be taken not to over-rate and over-reliſh any of the innocent Pleaſures of Life, not to exult or rejoice in them, or have too feeling a Senſe and Perception of them; for this will very much blunt the Edge of our Deſires after higher and better Things, and extinguiſh the Divine Life and Spirit within us.

ALL the Difficulty lies in determining how far we may ſafely venture in the Enjoyment of lawful Pleaſures, and innocent Satisfactions of Life; and where we muſt break off, if we mean to be ſafe, and out of the Reach of Danger.

THERE are many Things that are in their own Nature innocent or indifferent, which yet upon many Accounts are not ſo to Me; And there is

ſuch a Latitude in the Degrees and Measures of Duty, and Deviations from it; ſuch a Variety and Difference in Mens Conſtitutions and Diſpoſitions both of Body and Soul, that it is very difficult in ſeveral Caſes to define nicely what is lawful or not, and impoſſible to lay down any particular Rule which will reach all Caſes and ſerve all Perſons. And therefore the ſafeſt and wiſeſt Way is to follow the Apoſtle's Example, 1 *Cor.* vi. 12. *All Things* (ſays he) *are lawful unto me,* (ſpeaking of indifferent Things) *but all Things are not expedient: All Things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the Power of any.* SERM. II.

He was reſolved, and it was a noble Reſolution, and an Argument of a great and generous Spirit; that no worldly Soveraignty or Authority ſhould be over his Mind; that he would not ſo far indulge his Appetites in any Thing, as to bring himſelf into a diſadvantageous State of Slavery and Subjection.

And this is the Rule which in all Caſes, in all our Enjoyments of the Things of this Life we muſt obſerve: Never to indulge our bodily Appetites to the Hurt and Prejudice of our ratio-

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SERM. II.

nal Nature, but to refrain from ſuch Degrees of corporeal Pleaſure (though otherwiſe never ſo innocent) as do either diſorder our Reaſon, or any Ways indiſpoſe us for the Enjoyment of more pure and Spiritual Pleaſures: And by all rational and poſſible Methods to weaken the Force and Power of the Body, and encreaſe the Strength and Authority, the Vigor and Activity of the Mind.

THIS is all the Rule that can be laid down in this Caſe; and this every Man may apply to himſelf, by carefully obſerving his own Temper and Diſpoſition, and ſetting a Guard upon his weak Side.

HE muſt conſult with himſelf, and examine what are the prevailing Luſts and Paſſions of his Soul, and which is the Sin that ſo eaſily beſets him: By what Arts or Practices the Light of his Underſtanding comes to be clouded and obſcured, the Authority and Government of his Reaſon weakened and confounded, and his Conſcience hardened and rendered more and more inſenſible of Sin.

SERM. II.

AND when he has discovered This, he must carefully avoid these Things, as Temptations and Snares: He must industriously *abstain from these fleshly Lusts* which thus pierce him to the quick, and prove deadly Poison to the Soul.

AND this may suffice for the Second Thing; which was, to shew how far we are obliged to abstain from these fleshly Lusts; and that is, from all irregular and inordinate Gratifications of them, and from all such Degrees of lawful and allowable Enjoyments, as tend to weaken and impair our Reason, and destroy that Rule and Authority, that Soveraignty and Power, which the Soul ought always to exercise over the Body.

IN the first Case, a total Abstinence is enjoined: In the second, a just and prudent Moderation: Which I come now to perswade you to Practice, by laying before you in the

III. THIRD Place, Those Arguments which the Apostle uses to this Purpose, and explaining the Force of them: And they are these Two.

THE first is taken from our State and Condition in this World. *I beseech you as Strangers and Pilgrims.* THE

SERM. II. THE ſecond is drawn from the pernicious Effects and Tendency of theſe fleſhly Luſts, their Enmity and Hoſtility againſt the Soul; *Abſtain from fleſhly Luſts, which war againſt the Soul.*

1. THE *firſt* Argument which the Apoſtle uſes to perſuade us to abſtain from theſe fleſhly Luſts, is taken from our preſent State and Condition in this World, *I beſeech you as Strangers and Pilgrims.*

THE *Jews*, to whom this Epiſtle was written, were ſcattered abroad among the *Gentiles*, driven from their own Home, and diſperſed over ſeveral foreign Lands.

AND from the Circumſtances they were then in, the Apoſtle takes Occaſion to remind them of the common Condition of all Mankind, who are but Strangers and Pilgrims here on Earth, as the old Patriarchs confeſſed, *Heb.* xi. 13. And the *Pſalmiſt* alſo acknowledges, *Pſal.* xxxix. 12. *I am a Stranger with thee, and a Sojourner, as all my Fathers were.*

AND thus *Philo* comments upon thoſe Words of the Patriarch *Jacob*, *Gen.* xlvii. 9. *The Days of the Years of my Pilgrimage*

Pilgrimage are One hundred and thirty Years: Few and evil have the Days of the Years of my Life been, and have not attained unto the Days of the Years of the Life of my Fathers, in the Days of their Pilgrimage. SERM. II.

"WE come into this World (*says he*) to sojourn for a short Time, and "not to dwell here as perpetual Inhabitants: For the Soul of every good "and wise Man, has Heaven for its "Country, and this Earth only for its "Land of Pilgrimage."

AND so *Plato* tells us, "That what "is commonly said, is very true; that "this Life is nothing else but a short "Stay, in a strange and foreign Land."

SO that this, it seems, was no new Doctrine, but the common received Opinion of the best and wisest Men. Wherefore, to name no more, we find *Cato* thus brought in speaking by *Tully*: "Nature has given us here only an "Inn to lodge in, not a Place to "dwell in."

AND how many Arguments does this Consideration afford us to abstain from these fleshly Lusts, and use great Caution and much Moderation in all

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SERM. II. our worldly Enjoyments, and sensual Delights.

FOR since this is our State and Condition here, since we are but Strangers and Pilgrims in this World; since this is not our proper Home, nor final Place of Abode, but only a Land which we sojourn in for a short Time, the Wilderness through which we pass to our Heavenly Country: What a Folly is it to dote upon any Thing we meet with here, or be immoderately concerned at what befalls us?

THE Things which we are so apt to be taken with and admire, are not our own, but only lent us for a Time, and which we must shortly resign to the Use of others.

AND therefore to be immoderately fond of any of the Pleasures and Conveniences of Life, to set our Affections upon our Riches and Honours, our Estates and Preferments, our Kindred and Acquaintance, is altogether as foolish as it would be for a Traveller to fall in Love with his Inn, and be fond of the Company and Conveniences he there meets with, when he knows he must

must leave it the next Morning, and never return to it again. SERM. II.

BUT to be not only fond of the Things we meet with here, but to be ſo taken up with them, ſo ſtrongly wedded to, and deeply immerſed in them, as to ſay in our Hearts, 'Tis good for us to be here, and ſet up our Reſt on this Side Heaven; is as great a Madneſs as it would be for the Traveller to make the Inn his Home, and lay aſide all farther Thoughts of his Journey and Buſineſs. And therefore whenever we meet with any Thing which pleaſes us here, and which is apt to captivate our Affections; as often as our worldly Projects and Deſigns ſucceed, and GOD is pleaſed to bleſs us with Succeſs, and give us Plenty of the good Things of this Life, and we find ourſelves tempted to put our Truſt in uncertain Riches, and ſet our Hearts and Affections upon this World; let us call to Mind our Condition here, that we are but Strangers and Pilgrims in a foreign Land, and ought to look upon all theſe Things with the ſame Indifferency, as the Traveller views the ſtately Buildings, the great Cities, and fine Countries through which he paſſes. HE

SERM. II. He cannot indeed but admire them, and be pleased with the Prospect; but they do not make any deep Impression upon him, nor greatly affect him, because his Interest lies in another Place: He takes a transient View as he passes along, but his Mind is still intent upon his Journey's End, nor will he suffer himself to be long detained or diverted by any Thing he meets with in the Road.

So 'tis lawful for us to take this Pleasure in the good Things of this Life. We are thankfully to accept and enjoy these Blessings, but then we must take Care that we make no other Use of them than what God designed, nor love them beyond their true Value.

They are but so many Accommodations in our Journey through this World; They are lent us to support and entertain us in this Pilgrimage of Life, and make our Passage easy through this Vale of Misery and Trouble.

And therefore we must always remember This, and not suffer these Things which were designed to set us forward in our Journey, to entangle and ensnare us, to engross our Affections, and make us Slaves.

We

SERM. II.

WE are but Strangers and Pilgrims here, environed with much Ignorance, and Darkneſs; and This ſhould make us very cautious of being too familiar with any ſtrange Objects in this ſtrange Land, and put us upon our Guard, leaſt under Shew of Kindneſs, we ſhould be deceived with Treachery, and have the deadlieſt Poiſon conveyed to us with the ſweeteſt Taſte.

WITHOUT this Care and Circumſpection no Safety or Security can be had. And thoſe Things in which we know there is no Danger, and that they are in all Reſpects what they appear to be, we muſt not love and admire ſo far, as to place our Happineſs in them, and forget that we have other and nobler Things in View, which theſe muſt be ſubſervient to, and were lent us to procure.

AND therefore to this Conſideration of our being Strangers and Pilgrims in general, let us add this other of the particular Place to which we are travelling: And this will furniſh us with freſh Arguments to abſtain from theſe fleſhly Luſts.

OUR Converſation, our Citizenſhip is in Heaven; And however at preſent we converſe with this World, and are in

SERM. II. ſome Meaſure concerned about theſe worldly Things, yet we are not of the World, nor are theſe worldly Things our proper Buſineſs and Concern.

WE have another and a higher Intereſt carrying on; in Compariſon of which, all Things here below, will be found to be but light, and leſs than nothing.

WE are taken into a new Relation to GOD, and adopted into an Eternal Inheritance. Wherever we are here diſperſed, or whatever our worldly State and Condition is, we are Sons of GOD and Heirs of Heaven, and ought to do nothing unworthy of ſo high a Calling, or which will render us unfit for ſuch an honourable Eſtate.

BUT as the Children of this World, who are born to great Honours and Eſtates, are in their Education diſtinguiſhed from the Vulgar, and carefully trained up in a Manner ſuitable to their Birth and Station; that when they come to be Men, they may be fit for their Place, and Quality; may be no Diſgrace to their Family or themſelves, but fill their Poſt with Honour, and maintain their Character: So we Chriſtians, who

who are the peculiar People of GOD, SERM.
separated from the World, ought not II.
to conform ourselves to the Guise of this sinful World, but be as unlike it as we can in all Holiness and Purity of Conversation.

WE must call to mind that we belong to a better Country; and while we live here, must carry ourselves as Citizens of Heaven, and consult the Dignity and Honour of our Profession.

WE must remember that we are Strangers and Pilgrims here; that we live among Strangers and Enemies, and therefore must be very careful to bring no Scandal upon ourselves, amongst those who will be sure to watch us, and take all Advantages against us: But must, as the Apostle goes on in the Verse after the Text, *have our Conversation honest among the* Gentiles; *that whereas they speak against us as evil Doers, they may by our good Works which they shall behold, glorify God in the Day of Visitation.*

WE must never forget that we carry something about us, of far higher Dignity and nobler Extraction than to be accounted a Citizen of this lower World.

SERM. III. This Earth, at moſt, can but lay Claim to our Bodies, the leaſt and worſt Part that belongs to us. They indeed were taken out of the Duſt, and to Duſt they muſt return; and with Reſpect to them we may, with *Job*, chap. xvii. 14. ſay to *Corruption, thou art my Father, and to the Worm, thou art my Mother and my Siſter.*

BUT our Souls know no Corruption: They were created to be immortal, and are nearly allied to the FATHER of Spirits. Heaven is their Country, which with the Patriarchs they deſire and ſeek after. They are here as Strangers and Pilgrims; and while they are preſent in this Body they are abſent from their proper Home, and kept out of that Eternal Inheritance which belongs to them.

AND therefore ſince they are deſigned for ſuch a high Station, a Life eternal in the Heavens; Since they are of ſuch a noble Extraction, and will be admitted into Fellowſhip with GOD the Judge of All, with our Bleſſed SAVIOUR, and the Spirits of Juſt Men made perfect; How unworthy and unbecoming is it for them to ſtoop to the ſordid Gratifications

Gratifications of Senſe, to be drowned and immerſed in fleſhly Luſts, and take up with ſuch groſs Pleaſures, as not only other Men who have no ſuch Hopes after Death, but even Beaſts who have no Proſpect beyond the preſent, have as great a Reliſh of as They!

SERM. II.

How unſuitable is this to their Dignity; and how diſagreeable to that State for which they were originally deſigned? And how greatly will it indiſpoſe and incapacitate them for that Happineſs and Employment, which they will meet with when they come to their native Home, and have finiſhed their Pilgrimage here, and left this Earth and earthly Things behind them?

2. But this falls under the Second Argument, which the Apoſtle uſes to perſuade us to abſtain from theſe fleſhly Luſts; which is drawn from the pernicious Effects and Tendency of them, their Enmity and Hoſtility againſt the Soul. *Abſtain from fleſhly Luſts, which war againſt the Soul.*

There *is a Law in our Members warring againſt the Law of our Mind, and bringing us into Captivity to the Law of Sin which is in our Members.* Rom. vii, 23.

SERM. II. This is what every Man finds true by woful Experience.

THAT which our inward Man is delighted with, and which with Satisfaction our Mind would make its Rule; is the Law of GOD. But we feel in our Members another Principle of Action equivalent to a Law, directly waging War againſt that Law which our Mind would follow, and leading us captive into an unwilling Subjection to the conſtant Inclination and Impulſe of our carnal Appetites.

SO that here the Chriſtian Warfare muſt begin, and here it muſt end, in ſubduing the Appetites of the Body to the Reaſon of the Mind, the Luſts of the Fleſh to the Laws of GOD.

THUS was the chief Aim of the Heathen Philoſophy, but which it was unable to effect for want of ſufficient Helps. And This is the great Buſineſs of Chriſtianity, which we undertake together with our Profeſſion.

AND what great Reaſon we have to begin betimes, to abſtain from theſe fleſhly Luſts, and enter the Liſts as ſoon as we come to the Uſe of our Reaſon, will appear, if we take a ſhort

and View of those many great Advantages which these fleshly Lusts have in this Warfare which they wage against the Soul. And SERM. II.

1. OUR fleshly Lusts, our bodily Appetites exert themselves first, and grow up to Strength and Maturity sooner than our Reason. We are born with Capacities of Good as well as Evil; but our Propensions to Evil have a quicker Growth than our Propensions to Good, and are assisted betimes by an early Acquaintance with sensible Things, and our Conversation with the World.

WE live the Life of Sense, long before we enter upon a Life of Reason and Religion. And while the Soul lies, as it were, asleep, without exerting any of those noble Faculties which are lodged in it; our animal Part is stirring betimes, and has made very strong and deep Impressions upon our tender Years.

OUR Passions are our first Governors, under whose Conduct we come. They get Possession of us, and almost secure our Souls on their Side, before they are capable of judging for themselves. For we grow by Degrees into a rational Creature, through long Custom, re-

SERM. II.

peated Inſtructions, and tedious Experience.

So that when we come to Years of Diſcretion, we find it Work enough to raze out the wrong Impreſſions which external Objects have made upon us, to deſtroy the Dominion of Senſe, and eſtabliſh the Empire of Reaſon. But

2. ANOTHER great Advantage which theſe fleſhly Luſts have over us, is, that they are ever with us, and reckon all that we have is theirs, and will never leave ſolliciting us, 'till we have yielded to their Importunities.

WHILE we continue in this mortal State, Fleſh and Blood too often prove the prevailing Ingredients in us. The corruptible Body preſſes down the Soul; and the Neceſſities of That, are more felt, than the Reaſonings of This.

So that if great Care be not taken, Men will be very apt to follow their Paſſions inſtead of hearkening to their Reaſon; and deſire what theſe ſuggeſt, rather than do what That ſhall dictate.

THESE fleſhly Luſts we carry conſtantly about us. 'Tis an Enemy which lays cloſe Siege to us, and diſtreſſes us in our very Gates. They watch all Oe-

caſions

casions of tempting us, and wait all Opportunities of being admitted; and will be sure to press hardest upon us, and be most importunate, whenever our Reason is least employed. SERM. III.

AND this is a vast Advantage which they have over us, by being always present with us. For few Men are such Masters of Reason, as to have it always ready and at hand whenever there is Occasion for it. But these fleshly Lusts are never far off; they *are about our Bed, and about our Path, and beset us in all our Ways.* They come in of their own Accord, and will be sure to sue to us for what they want, when our Reason is to seek; and will be then most earnest, when we are least able to deny them. And we shall be so much the more in Danger, because we shall not be so apt to apprehend any Danger from them; they being a Part of us, and such a Part, as we are always apt to be most fond of, and forward to indulge. But

3. THESE fleshly Lusts receive an additional Strength from the many Temptations we shall meet with from the World.

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SERM. II.

WE not only carry about us a Body of Fleſh and Blood, cloathed with ſundry Paſſions, and encompaſſed with many Imperfections; but we are daily ſurrounded with ſenſible Objects, which make very lively and laſting Impreſſions upon us. We live in a World which abounds with Variety of Temptations, and where we walk in the midſt of Snares. We meet with many Allurements and Invitations to Sin, and there never wants Fuel to feed our Luſts.

THERE are Riches and worldly Wealth, to tempt the covetous Worldlings: Great Honours and magnificent Titles, to enflame the Ambitious: Provocations innumerable to Anger and Paſſion: And the Blandiſhment of Pleaſures, to enſnare the Senſual and Voluptuous.

IN a word, There are Baits ſuited to every Palate, Temptations of every Sort and Size, and theſe are managed with all the Art and Cunning by our Adverſary the Devil: So that whatever fleſhly Luſt we harbour and indulge, will not fail to meet with an Object ſuitable to it, to nouriſh and enflame it,

it, and transport it beyond the Bounds of Reason and Religion. SERM. II.

WE must therefore use great Moderation in abstaining from these fleshly Lusts: which though, as they are born with us, and we bring them into the World, they are innocent and harmless, yet by our Converse with the World, will soon encrease and gather Strength, and make War upon the Soul. As will be very evident if we consider in the

4. FOURTH Place, That these fleshly Lusts, are our greatest, if not our only Enemies, from whence all our Danger comes.

MEN are, I know, in all Cases, especially in their Sins, very unwilling to own they are in Fault; but are for removing the Blame from themselves, and laying it where it will least lie. Hence they are so ready to plead the Temptations of the World and the Devil in their Excuse; to charge their Crimes upon pressing Necessity, and even upon a fatal Destiny, and very loath to have them thought their own Work, and free Choice.

AND

SERM. II.

AND yet if we conſider Things right, we ſhall ſoon ſee, that our greateſt Enemies are thoſe of our own Houſhold, theſe fleſhly Luſts which war againſt the Soul.

THE greateſt Part of that Wickedneſs we ſee daily committed in the World, ſprings from the evil Motions of Mens own Minds, and may eaſily be accounted for upon that Principle.

'TIS not to be doubted, becauſe the Scripture affirms it, that *the Devil goes about as a roaring Lion, ſeeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. v. 8. He is daily fighting and troubling us, and watches all Opportunities to take us:

BUT after all (as a great Man has expreſſed it) "Mens own Luſts are "generally to them, the worſt Devil "of the two. The Devil within, does "much more ſtrongly incline them to "Sin, than the Devil without, and is "by far the moſt cunning and power-"ful Tempter."

EXTERNAL Temptations may move and excite Men to Sin; but 'tis their own Free-will and Conſent, that makes Temptations ſo prevalent and ſucceſsful.

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SERM. II.

THE World is full of Objects, and we are fitted with Faculties to receive Impressions from them. But 'tis in our Power to turn our Eyes from forbidden Objects, and keep those that are lawful at a due Distance. Sinners may and will entice us, but we may with-hold our Consent. Opportunities may invite us, but we can refuse to comply. Bodily Constitution may dispose us; but, if our Heart be willing, This may be corrected and overcome. The Devil may be busy, but we may resist him; and then he will flee from us. He may persuade us, but he cannot prevail with us against our Wills; he cannot force us to Sin.

NOR is there any Thing which makes his Wiles so successful against us, as our own fleshly Lusts and vicious Inclinations. Were it not for these, Temptations would find nothing in us to work upon. They would lose their Hold, and not be able to fasten or have any Force upon us.

BUT as long as we nourish these fleshly Lusts, we have a Party within us, that is false and treacherous, and holds

SERM. II. holds a ſecret Correſpondence with the Enemy.

IF we were but true to ourſelves, and all was right within, nothing from without could hurt us; but by the Grace of GOD, which is never wanting to our ſincere Endeavours, we might defy Temptations, and ſhould be more than Conquerors. But as long as our own Hearts are wicked and corrupt, and our fleſhly Luſts unſubdued; Temptations, when they come, will meet with a kind Welcome, inſtead of any Reſiſtance. The Aſſaults from without, will be ſeconded by Treachery from within; and our own Luſts will betray us, and open the Gates for the Enemy to enter.

AND this is the true Cauſe which the Apoſtles aſſigns of Mens Wickedneſs, *James* i. 13. *Let no Man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of Evil, neither tempteth he any Man: But every Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Luſt, and enticed. Then when Luſt hath conceived, it bringeth forth Sin; and Sin, when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth*

forth Death. Thus is our Destruction from ourselves, and our Misery of our own making. SERM. II.

WE see then what great Reason we have to abstain from these fleshly Lusts, and keep a strict Guard and watchful Eye upon them, because they have so many Advantages over us in this Warfare. If we do not lay a due Restraint upon them, they will quickly over-power us, and lead us captive at their Will. Every Temptation we meet with, will prove too hard for us; and the weakest Enemy we have, will, when joyn'd by them, get the Victory, and make Havock of our Souls. Our Reason and Understanding will be blinded, our Judgment bribed and corrupted; our Freedom and Liberty taken from us; and we shall no longer have it in our Power to consult our true Interest, the Interest of our Souls; but shall be so immersed in the Body, and enslaved to Sensual Pleasures, that we shall be both unworthy and unfit for the Employment and Happiness of Heaven.

AND this may suffice for Explication of the Arguments the Apostle uses

SERM. II. ſures, to perſuade us to abſtain from theſe fleſhly Luſts; which, as we are Strangers and Pilgrims, it is highly unbecoming to gratify and indulge, and very dangerous with reſpect to our Intereſt in Heaven; which cannot but greatly ſuffer, and be extremely prejudiced, and (if great Care be not taken) will be wholly ruined thereby.

SUFFER me therefore in the

IV. FOURTH and Laſt Place, briefly to Cloſe all with a Word of Exhortation.

WE are but *Strangers and Pilgrims* here; in this World we have no continuing City, nor any laſting Buſineſs: What a Folly then is it, to be greatly concerned for thoſe Things which will not long concern us!

THIS is the Apoſtle's Argument, 1 *Cor.* vii. 29. *But this I ſay, Brethren, the Time is ſhort; it remaineth that they that have Wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoyce, as though they rejoyced not; and they that buy, as though they poſſeſſed not;*

and

and they that uſe this World, as not abu- SERM.
ſing it: for the Faſhion of this World II.
paſſeth away. i. e. The Time for enjoying all theſe Things is very ſhort; and therefore they that are poſſeſſed of any of theſe Things, ſhould not ſet their Hearts upon them, but uſe them with Chriſtian Indifferency and Reſignation. To which Purpoſe the Words of an Ancient Writer are very remarkable: *Hermas Lib.* 3. *Sect.* 1. "You, that are the Servants of GOD, "know that ye are here in a Land of "Pilgrimage; that the City to which "you properly belong, is far diſtant "from this in which you now ſojourn. "If therefore you have any Know-"ledge of that City wherein you are "to dwell for ever, why are you ſo "buſy and thoughtful in purchaſing "Eſtates here, in adding Field to Field, "enlarging your Barns, and laying up "Goods for many Years? All this is "ſuperfluous, and Labour in vain; and "looks, as if you had no Deſign of "returning into your own Country." *

* Vid. 2 Eſdras xvi. 40, 41, &c. Et Juſt. Mart. Ep. ad Diognetum.

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THERE is nothing ſo inconſiſtent with the Hopes and Expectations of a Chriſtian, as an immoderate Concern for the Things of this Life; nor is there any Thing which will indiſpoſe us ſo much for that Glory and Happineſs which ſhall be revealed. And therefore abſtaining from theſe fleſhly Luſts, and moderating our Love and Affection for all theſe ſenſible and corporeal Things, is one of the greateſt Duties of a Chriſtian, and abſolutely neceſſary to qualify him to enter into the Joy of his LORD.

AND the Argument I have been inſiſting on, is very well urged to this very Purpoſe by *Porphyry*. *

"We are (ſays he) in this World "like Men in a ſtrange Country, who "are not only deſtitute of their own "proper Laws and Government, but "by long Uſe become reconciled to fo-"reign Laws and Cuſtoms: And there-"fore as every ſuch Man who deſigns "to return into his own Country, does "not only provide for his Journey, but conſiders

* Περὶ ἀποχῆς, 1°. p. 59. &c.

"conſiders with himſelf how he ſhall SERM.
"get quit of all thoſe ſtrange Habits II.
"and Cuſtoms he has contracted in a
"ſtrange Land, and bring himſelf again
"to the Uſe and Practice of thoſe
"Things which he has long laid aſide
"and almoſt forgotten, and yet with-
"out which his native Country will
"neither receive nor own him:" So
if we, whoſe Citizenſhip is in Hea-
ven, ever think of returning thither
to enjoy the Privileges and Happineſs of
that State; we muſt prepare for it by
cleanſing our Souls of whatever Defile-
ments they have contracted in the Bo-
dy during their Abode in this wicked
World: *By putting off the old Man* Eph. iv.
with the Luſts and Affections thereof, 22.
and being renewed in the Spirit of
our Minds; and putting on the new
Man, which after God is created in
Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs: By
abſtaining from ſenſual Pleaſures, and
weaning our Affections from this World;
that when we arrive at our own Coun-
try, we may be no Strangers to the
Happineſs and Employment of that
State.

SERM. II.

THIS is what we muſt make our conſtant Buſineſs and Study in theſe Days of our Pilgrimage; and without this Care and Study we ſhall never be ripe for Eternity, nor have any Title or Capacity for Heaven.

THE Life we now live here, is ſo much unlike that we muſt live for ever hereafter, that we had need uſe all our Endeavours to attain a Heavenly Temper and Divine Diſpoſition of Mind.

THE Soul is too nearly and intimately joined to the Body, and is too much affected with corporeal Satisfactions. We are always attent to our Senſes, and our Senſes are always upon the World. We converſe with the World, we talk of the World, we are daily projecting for the World, and taken up with worldly Things; And what can this produce but a carnal Spirit, and worldly Frame of Soul? And how diſagreeable is This to that Life which we muſt live in Heaven?

THE Apoſtle tells us, *Rom.* viii. 6. That *to be carnally minded is Death; but to be ſpiritually minded is Life and Peace.* And *Verſe* 13; That *if we*

we live after the Fleſh we ſhall die; but if through the Spirit we mortify the Deeds of the Body, we ſhall live. SERM. II.

As therefore we value our Eternal Life and Happineſs, it concerns us to abſtain from theſe fleſhly Luſts, which war againſt the Soul. Theſe are thoſe Sirens which would charm us into a Forgetfulneſs of ourſelves, and divert us from purſuing our Courſe to Heaven, or transform us into ſuch vile Tempers as will make us unmeet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.

WITH theſe we muſt wage perpetual War, and uſe all our Force to ſubdue them. The Crucifying the Fleſh with the Luſts and Affections thereof, muſt be the End and Aim of all our Religious Exerciſes; particularly of thoſe Duties of Watching and Prayer, Faſting and Abſtinence, Mortification and Self-denial, for which this ſolemn Seaſon is peculiarly ſet apart. That when GOD is pleaſed to remove us hence, he may remove us with all Advantages for Eternity. That when we leave this World, we may not be ſo wedded to any of theſe worldly Things, as not to

SERM. II. be happy without them; But may go hence with ſuch a perfect Renunciation of all carnal Pleaſures, and have our Senſes ſo ſpiritually exerciſed to diſcern the Things of GOD, that we may carry with us into Heaven ſuch a quick Senſe and lively Reliſh of the Joys above, as to be able immediately to join ourſelves in the Buſineſs and Company of that Place; and be fully ſatisfied with that Fulneſs of Joy which is in GOD's Preſence, and thoſe Pleaſures which are at His Right-Hand for evermore.

PROVERBS

A

PROVERBS xiv. 14.

——A good Man ſhall be ſatisfied from himſelf.

The whole Verſe runs thus:

The Backſlider in Heart ſhall be filled with his own Ways, and a good Man ſhall be ſatisfied from himſelf.

THESE Words repreſent to us the different Tendency which virtuous and vicious Courſes naturally have, the one to Miſery, the other to Happineſs. SERM. III.

THE *Backſlider in Heart*; he that, to avoid a Danger, revolts from thoſe virtuous Courſes which he knows he ought to have adhered to; ſhall ſurely feel

SERM. III. Trouble enough, and bring upon himſelf Miſery and Ruin by his own Devices. *He ſhall be filled with his own Ways.* But a truly good Man is, even in this, by far ſuperior to him, that though he ſhould ſuffer, yet his own Integrity, and the Clearneſs and Quietneſs of his Conſcience, gives him abundant Satisfaction. By perſevering in virtuous Courſes, he has a Spring of Comfort ariſing from himſelf. *A good Man ſhall be ſatisfied from himſelf.*

THIS Phraſe of *being filled with his own Ways*, is much the ſame with what we meet with in *Chap.* i. 31. of this Book; where 'tis ſaid of the Wicked who refuſed to hearken to GOD's Call, and would not be reclaimed from their Sins, that *therefore ſhall they eat of the Fruit of their own Way, and be filled with their own Devices.* This is parallel to the Text, and means that the Wicked, the Backſlider in Heart, ſhall feel the Effects of his own Folly, and be ruined thereby. *The Turning away of the Simple ſhall ſlay them.* And, on the contrary, *a good Man* ſhall likewiſe reap the Fruits of his Goodneſs; he too ſhall be filled with his own Ways, and

be

be satisfied from himself. And This is what I intend for the Subject of my following Discourse. SERM. III.

THAT Virtue is its own Reward, and is alone sufficient to a happy Life, was an Opinion in great Esteem among the Ancient Philosophers, especially the *Stoicks*. And though they carried this Point too far, and advanced such Things in Favour of it, as were beyond the Reach of Human Nature: yet it must be owned to be a glorious Notion, and that nothing can be said greater in Behalf of Virtue.

AND there is so much Truth, as well as Goodness in it, that the Scriptures, which always make use of every Motive proper to work upon Reasonable Creatures, do frequently insist upon it. Thus, *Prov.* iii. 1, 2, *My Son, forget not my Law; but let thine Heart keep my Commandments: For length of Days, and long Life, and Peace shall they add to thee.* And again, *Ver.* 16, 17. where the Wise Man is recommending the Practice of Virtue, he tells us, That *length of Days is in her right Hand, and in her left Hand, Riches and Honour. Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.* AND

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AND in the *New Teſtament*, temporal Proſperity and Happineſs are frequently promiſed as a Reward to Virtue. *Bleſſed are the Meek*, (ſays our SAVIOUR,) *for they ſhall inherit the Earth*, Matth. v. 5. and vi. 33, *Seek ye firſt the Kingdom of God, and his Righteouſneſs, and all theſe Things ſhall be added unto you.* And St. *Paul* tells us, That *Godlineſs is profitable unto all Things, having the Promiſe of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.* All which, and many more Paſſages, amount to thus much at leaſt, That a Virtuous Life is the beſt Courſe we can take to ſecure our Happineſs.

1 Tim. iv. 8.

BUT the Philoſophers went much farther in their Commendations of Virtue. They made their Wiſe, *i. e.* their virtuous Man, not only regardleſs, but even inſenſible of every Thing that concerned the Body and this Life. His Virtue was Proof againſt Want and Pain, and all the Miſeries and Afflictions which could befall the outward Man. But this, was talking beyond the Reach of Human Nature. It was no better than prevaricating and diſſembling, and giving themſelves the Lye. For the Man that

that is in Poverty and Pain, who is afflicted in Body or Estate, let his Virtues be never so many and great, will be affected in his Mind too, and be far from being in a State of present Happiness. He cannot help feeling his Pain, and being sensible of his Wants; and so far as he does this, so far he is miserable. SERM. III.

AND therefore Religion, which *is our reasonable Service*, and treats us like Men, does not require unreasonable Things of us, nor that we should behave ourselves above the Measures of a Man. It does not pretend to make us insensible of Evils, nor prohibit the Use of all lawful Means to prevent or remove them. On the contrary, Religion lays the best Foundation for our Happiness in this World, by prescribing such Rules, as, if we observe them, will enable us either to avoid these temporal Evils, or will support us under them. So that supposing the Sinner and the Saint, the Wicked and the Righteous, to have the same Advantages with respect to these outward Things, to be in the same or the like Circumstances, whether of Prosperity or Adversity; the one will

SERM. III. will be, not only leſs miſerable, but much happier than the other. The Good Man will have more Pleaſure in the good Things of this Life, and leſs of the Evils than the Wicked. Beſides which, he has Enjoyments peculiar to himſelf, which the Sinner is a perfect Stranger to; and which will, in a great Meaſure, ſupply the want of every thing elſe, and fully demonſtrate the Truth of the *Text*, That *A Good Man is ſatisfied from himſelf.*

BY a good Man, we are to underſtand one who is univerſally ſo; who keeps inflexibly to his Duty at all Times, and in all Inſtances whatever. The Man that is ſober and temperate, meek and humble, juſt and merciful; and all this upon Principles of Religion and Conſcience. And therefore as he behaves himſelf thus towards his Neighbour and himſelf; ſo he will demean himſelf with all Piety and Devotion, Reverence, Reſignation, and Submiſſion towards God.

Now of ſuch a Man as This, it may be truly affirmed.

1. THAT he is moſt likely to eſcape the Evils and Calamities of Life, and to paſs through this World the freeſt from Troubles and Vexations.

2. WHAT-

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2. WHATEVER Calamities or Afflictions befall him, he is better able to bear with, than other People.

3. HE has Pleaſures and Enjoyments peculiar to himſelf, which others are Strangers to; and which will in a great Meaſure ſupply the Want of external Bleſſings, and make him *ſatisfied from himſelf.*

THESE are the Particulars which I have already hinted, and ſhall now more diſtinctly conſider.

1. A GOOD Man is *moſt likely* to eſcape the Evils and Calamities of Life, and to paſs through this World the freeſt from Troubles and Vexations.

HIS Virtues will be a natural Defence and Security to him againſt many Evils and Miſeries, which would otherwiſe befall him. And though he muſt not expect to eſcape the common and unavoidable Accidents of Life, and to be above the Reach of thoſe Miſeries and Misfortunes which are the inſeparable Attendants of this imperfect State of Things, and the very Condition of our Being here: yet he will come off with leſs Hurt, and fare much better than other People.

FOR

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FOR many, I might ſay, moſt of thoſe Things which imbitter Human Life, and diſturb Mens Peace and Quiet, ariſe from their Faults or Follies, their unreaſonable Luſts, and unruly Paſſions. Intemperance and Exceſs, are deſtructive of the good Health and Conſtitution of our Bodies; they bring Diſeaſes and Sickneſs upon us; they cut ſhort our Days, or make Life a Burden to us. Malice and Ill-nature, Cruelty and Revenge, diſturb the Calm and Repoſe of our Minds, and by that Means impair the Health of our Bodies too; and beſides this, have an ill Influence upon our outward Circumſtances; For they ſet Men againſt us, and make them our Enemies; they hinder and obſtruct us in the Management of our Concerns, and make Buſineſs difficult; and they bring down many Wrongs and Injuries upon us, which we might eaſily have eſcaped, if we could but have governed our Paſſions, and been better natured. Covetouſneſs and Ambition, beſides the Inquietude of Mind which conſtantly attends them, bring innumerable Inconveniences upon us, and are much more likely to ruin, than to raiſe us. But the Good Man, who

who harbours none of theſe unruly Paſ- SERM.
ſions, nor gives way to Humour and Fan- III.
cy, Prejudice and Prepoſſeſſion; but, in all his Deſires and Endeavours, keeps within thoſe Bounds which Nature and Reaſon have fixed, and Religion has more fully eſtabliſhed; will eſcape moſt of theſe Inconveniencies.

HE places his Happineſs in the Favour of God, and the Senſe of his own Integrity; and is not ſo eager in any Secular Projects and Deſigns, as to run himſelf into any Danger, or to ruin his own inward Peace and Quiet. He is not inſenſible of Temporal Bleſſings, nor does he undervalue the good Things of this Life: But then he does not overvalue them, nor is immoderate in his Purſuits of them. He deſires no more than what he wants; and he wants no more than what he can uſe and enjoy; and this reduces his Neceſſities to a narrow Compaſs.

HE bears an univerſal Good-will to all Mankind, and is always ready to do all the Good he can to others; and therefore is not likely to meet with ſo many Injuries, and ſo much Ill-treatment, as they who are of the contrary Temper and Behaviour.

HE

SERM. III.

HE is ſober and temperate in all his Pleaſures and Enjoyments; and this upon a Principle of Religion and Virtue; and therefore he is in a much fairer Way both to get and to keep thoſe two eſſential Ingredients of true Happineſs, a ſound Mind and a ſound Body, than they who ſet no Bounds to their Appetites and Paſſions.

THUS we ſee, a Good Man does by his Virtues remove the chief Cauſes of Trouble and Diſquiet, and take out of the Way the great Obſtacles and Impediments of Happineſs, ſince theſe ariſe from our inordinate Affections and irregular Deſires, which 'tis the Buſineſs of Religion to govern and reſtrain. So far then as the being free from Pain is one Step to Pleaſure, and the avoiding Miſery is a good Beginning and Foundation of Happineſs; ſo far will a Good Man be happy, and *ſatisfied from himſelf*. This is the natural Effect of the Virtues he is poſſeſſed of, and will, for the moſt part, be the Conſequence of them: I ſay, for the moſt part: for that it will ſometimes prove otherwiſe, cannot be denied. But then, I obſerve

2, THAT,

SERM. III.

2. THAT whatever Calamities or Afflictions befall a good Man, he will *bear with*, much *better* than other People.

AS the Principles upon which he acts, keep him from running out into vain Expectations, and engaging in fruitless Attempts; so whenever he is disappointed in his just Expectations, he can easily bear it. The Disappointment will not be so great to him, who takes an Estimate of Things, not from Fancy and Opinion, but from Truth and Reality, and the just Weight and Moment of them.

IF he meets with Losses in his outward Circumstances, and is deprived of a great Part of what he possessed; he will not be uneasy, because he knows that the Happiness of a Man's Life consisteth not in the Abundance of the Things which he possesses; and he will think the Remainder sufficient for the Ends of Wisdom and Virtue, sufficient to satisfy Nature, and to supply the Wants and Necessities, if not the Comforts and Conveniences of Life.

IF he be slighted, and undervalued, slandered and reproached; he considers that Men are apt to mistake, and that

SERM. III. he knows himself more and better than others do; and therefore if the Ill that is reported of him be true, he deserves it, and will take Care to amend, and to merit a better Character. If what he is charged with, be false and groundless, 'tis their Fault, and not his; and he cannot help it. 'Tis what the best Men have been liable to, as well as he; nnd many times the better they have been, the worse Treatment have they met with this Way. But nothing of this Kind can take away the Joy of a good Conscience, or deprive him of the comfortable Testimony of his own Mind. And so long as he has this on his Side, and has nothing to accuse himself of, 'tis a small Thing with him to be judged of Man's Judgment.

IF he labours under Pain and Sickness, any bodily Distemper or Infirmity; This though it cannot be denied to be an Evil, and inconsistent with a State of perfect Happiness; yet it may be considered, 1. That This, generally speaking, is not so likely to befall good Men as others, because Virtue is certainly an admirable Means of preserving our Health, and will keep us free from many

many Pains and Diseases, which vicious and irregular Courses expose Men to; either by being the first Cause and Occasion of them, or by heightening and increasing them when they proceed from other Things. And, 2. Where these Things are unavoidable, and the common Lot of all Men; the Virtuous Man will be less troubled and concerned, and feel less Pain from them than the Wicked. For he has all along been accustomed to Sobriety and Temperance, Abstinence and Self-denial; and these Virtues are good Preparatives for Hardships and Sufferings of any Kind. They gird up the Loins of our Mind, fortify our Souls, and fit them to meet with adverse Fortune. Whereas the Man, who has given himself up to riotous Living, *whose God is his Belly*, and who has always taken his Ease, and indulged in Softness and Sensuality, is, of all others, the most unfit for an afflicted State. Every Calamity and Misfortune will fall with a double Weight upon Him; Pain and Want, and Sickness, will make a deeper Impression upon him, and pierce him to the quick.

SERM. III.

So that the Godly has much the Advantage of the Sinner in theſe Reſpects. Though his Virtues are not full Proof againſt the Strokes of Fortune, and cannot ward off every Blow, yet they will blunt the Edge of Afflictions, and greatly abate their Smart.

AND in general, we may lay it down as an excellent Rule for the Conduct of our Lives, and the making ourſelves as happy as we can in this imperfect State; to conſider the Uncertainty of all theſe External Enjoyments, not to overvalue them, or ſet our Hearts upon them, or place our Happineſs in them; but to ſit as looſe as we can from this World, that ſo we may not be overwhelmed with Grief at any Loſs or Diſappointment we meet with. This is a Leſſon which the Good Man is perfect Maſter of, and whereby he will find Reſt to his Soul amidſt all the Changes and Chances of this mortal Life. But the Wicked, who place all their Happineſs in this uncertain World, and value nothing but the Things of this Life, will never want Matter of Trouble and Vexation.

FOR what makes the ambitious Man, who is furniſhed with all that a reaſonable

ble Soul can deſire, diſcontented and uneaſy; but becauſe he is immoderately fond of Honour and Applauſe, becauſe he overvalues himſelf and his own Merits, and thinks that he is not ſufficiently taken notice of and diſtinguiſhed? Why is the Rich Man, who has Goods laid up for many Years, many more than he can ever live to ſee, ſo ſollicitous to encreaſe his Store, and ſo fearful of every little Loſs, but becauſe he is immoderately in Love with this World, and the Things that are in the World: I ſay, what is the Diſturber of his Peace, but Covetouſneſs? SERM. III.

IT were eaſy to ſhow this of every other irregular Deſire, and inordinate Affection. And therefore the Good Man, whoſe Religion has taught him to moderate his Deſires, and to ſubdue every inordinate Paſſion, is above the Reach of theſe Diſturbances, and can eaſily bear that which other People cannot endure. He is already in the Heavenly State; he is raiſed aloft; and ſees this World, and all that is in it, beneath his Feet; and can contentedly leave it to be enjoyed by thoſe who

SERM. III. have no Reliſh for any Thing better. To which Purpoſe, I obſerve,

3. THAT a Good Man has Pleaſures and Enjoyments *peculiar* to himſelf, which other People are Strangers to, and which will, in a great Meaſure, ſupply the Want of External Bleſſings, and *make him ſatisfied from himſelf*.

THE Precepts of Religion are, in themſelves, holy, juſt and good; they are ſo ſuitable and agreeable to the Nature and Reaſon of Man, that we ought to obſerve and obey them upon their own Account, though there was nothing to reward our Obedience, or to puniſh our Diſobedience. In this Senſe it is an undeniable Truth, That Virtue is its own Reward, and that Happineſs conſiſts in the very doing of virtuous Actions. And therefore a Wiſe Man is ſatisfied with the Conſcience of Well-doing, and would not part with the Pleaſure ariſing from hence upon any Account. He would not do any diſhoneſt or wicked Thing, to avoid any Suffering or Torment whatſoever. The Reaſon is, becauſe GOD hath planted in our Nature an Averſion from Vice and Wickedneſs, and a Diſlike to it:

So

So that we cannot but condemn our- SERM.
ſelves for doing any Thing that is baſe III.
and diſhoneſt, unrighteous and unjuſt. No Man that is guilty of any Thing of this Kind, can acquit or abſolve himſelf: Nor will any Terror or Torment whatever, juſtify, or free us from Blame, if, to avoid it, we do any Thing of this Nature.

BUT on the contrary, if we reſolutely ſtick to that which is Good, whatever we ſuffer for it; we ſatisfy our own Conſcience, and rejoice with Joy unſpeakable in having done ſo, and gain the Approbation and Applauſe both of GOD and Man.

EVERY one that has right Apprehenſions of Good and Evil, cannot but receive great Satisfaction in avoiding the one, and following the other. That Man will be infinitely happy in himſelf, and appear amiable in the Eyes of others, who keeps himſelf pure from all Contagion of the Things of this Earth: Who when he beholds all the Kingdoms of this World, and the Glory of them is preſented to his View, as it was to our SAVIOUR's, yet he is not dazled by it, nor drawn aſide from the

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Ways of Righteousness, nor made to behave himself unworthily in any Instance, or transgress his Duty towards GOD or Man.

WHAT a Glorious Spectacle is *he* to GOD, as well as to Angels and Men, who encounters Dangers, and grapples with Difficulties in the Discharge of his Duty; who bids Defiance to the Sollicitations and Examples of the Men and Things of this World, and is able to get the better of them all? What Joy will such a Victory as this, raise in Heaven? And how fitly may GOD say of such a Person, as He did of *Job* to

Job ii. 3. *Satan, Hast thou considered my Servant* Job, *that there is none like him in the Earth; a perfect and an upright Man?* GOD seems to upbraid the Tempter, that he could not prevail against him.

AND most certainly, 'tis admirable to behold such an Object as this. We cannot choose but think it to be the most desirable State and Condition, what will make us happy in ourselves, and accepted with GOD. The Pleasure which results from this Frame and Temper of Mind, from having kept our Innocence, and done the Thing that is

right, notwithstanding all the Temptations to the contrary; is so far beyond any sensual Satisfactions and worldly Enjoyments, that when we have once tasted it, we shall be unwilling to part with it upon any Account, and shall think nothing too much to be done to improve it. SERM. III.

EVERY good and virtuous Action we do, affords us a double Pleasure. It first strikes our Minds with a direct Pleasure, by its Suitableness to our Nature; and then our Minds entertain themselves with pleasant Reflections upon it. The more we abound in such Actions as these, the more true Pleasure we enjoy; and no greater Happiness on this Side Heaven can be conceived, than a continued Course of such Actions, *i. e.* a Life of Religion and Virtue. This is that State and Temper of Mind, that Peace and Joy, that Tranquillity and Security, wherein Heaven itself consists. This is the proper Happiness of Man, as he is a rational Creature; and is the same to the Soul, as Health and Strength are to the Body. These encrease its Vigor and Activity; they put it into the best and easiest

State,

SERM. III. State, and ſet it at the greateſt Diſtance from all Trouble and Diſquiet.

So that though it cannot be denied that theſe outward Things are GOD's Bleſſings, and were graciouſly deſigned to contribute to our Happineſs, yet ſtill Virtue is the main Ingredient; in ſo much that without it the whole World cannot make us happy; and with it, a very ſmall Share of other Things will ſuffice.

SUPPOSE a Man in never ſo flouriſhing a Condition in his outward Circumſtances, yet, if he be deſtitute of Virtue; if he has no Government of himſelf and his Paſſions; if he runs out into the Exceſs of Riot; if he allows himſelf in Acts of Cruelty, Injuſtice and Oppreſſion, or any other unlawful Courſes; he will have much inward Trouble and Diſquiet, many a melancholy Thought and Reflection. His Guilt will ſit heavy upon him, and the Divine Vengeance will hang continually over him, and through Fear of Death he will be all his Life-Time ſubject unto Bondage.

BUT the Man that is conſcious to himſelf of his own Integrity, whoſe

Heart

Heart does not reproach him; who, SERM.
though he is not perfectly innocent (as III.
who is he that liveth and ſinneth not?)
yet he is ſincere; has never offended
of malicious Wickedneſs, nor been
groſsly negligent of his Duty; but has
made it his Buſineſs through the whole
Courſe of his Life to keep a Conſcience
void of Offence, towards GOD and
towards Man; though this Perſon be
in a low and afflicted State, and his
outward Condition is mean and miſe-
rable, yet he has ſomething within him
to ſupport him under it.

THOUGH he is under outward Miſe-
ries and Afflictions, yet he has the Satiſ-
faction to feel that all is right and ſound
within. He has the Pleaſure to conſider,
that though he has not met with any
great Succeſs in the World, yet he has
kept himſelf unſpotted from it; and
could never be prevailed upon to yield
to any unlawful Embraces. He can
recollect with great Satisfaction the
many Conqueſts he has gained over
Riches, Honours, and Senſuality; and
how in all his Conflicts with Fleſh and
Blood, his Reaſon has kept the Field,
and his Faith has overcome the World.

This

SERM. III. This is Matter of Triumph and Delight, and unſpeakable Satisfaction.

NOR is this all the Pleaſure we have from a virtuous Life. It fills us with ſtrong and lively Hopes, that, whatever our preſent Condition is, it will ſome Time or other go better with us. The truly Good Man feels himſelf in ſuch an excellent Frame and State of Mind, that he knows certainly that this muſt be the State of GOD Himſelf, and then he muſt love thoſe that are ſo like Him. Beſides, he is conſcious to himſelf that he has deſerved no Ill at any Man's Hands: On the contrary, it has been his Study to oblige Men by doing them all the Good Offices in his Power. This raiſes in him a probable Expectation that it may go well with him among Men in this World; But the firm Perſuaſion he has of the Love of GOD, and the Happineſs of Heaven, This is Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory.

FROM what has been ſaid upon this Argument, it appears

Firſt, HOW unjuſt that Reproach is, which is caſt upon Religion and Virtue, that they deprive us of all Joy and Comfort of our Lives, all Delight and Satisfaction,

faction, and fill us with Melancholy and Sadneſs of Heart; and that when once we enter upon a Religious Courſe of Life, we muſt bid *Adieu* to all the Mirth and Pleaſure of this World, and ſigh and weep out our Days. SERM. III.

THAT this is an untrue and groundleſs Charge, they well know, who are acquainted with the Ways of Piety and Virtue, and have experienced the Pleaſure and Satisfaction ariſing from them. The Practice of Religion and Virtue is agreeable to the Nature and Inclinations of Good Men. Every good and virtuous Action is as grateful and pleaſing to a Good Man, as Meat to the Hungry, and Drink to the Thirſty. It is as great a Satisfaction to his rational Inclinations, as they are to his ſenſual Appetites. *My Meat*, ſays our Bleſſed SAVIOUR, *is to do the Will of him that ſent me, and to finiſh his Work.* To the ſame Purpoſe is that of holy *Job*, *Neither have I gone back from the Commandment of his Lips; I have eſteemed the Words of his Mouth, more than my neceſſary Food.* John iv. 34. Job xxiii. 12.

DELIGHT and Pleaſure, inward Contentment and Satisfaction of Mind, Peace and Tranquillity of Soul, are the inſepa-

rable

SERM. III.

rable Attendants of religious and virtuous Actions, and do naturally follow the Fear of GOD, and the keeping his Commandments. When a Man has done his Duty, and spent his Time well, he can reflect upon his Doings with Comfort. He is not afraid to review his past Life, and to call himself to an Account for what he has done. And this is a never-failing Spring of Comfort. But this Joy is peculiar to the Righteous, and this joyful Gladness is for none but such as are upright in Heart. 'Tis a Pleasure which the Wicked are Strangers to, and which Sinners can never pretend to partake of.

AND for the Pleasures and Enjoyments of this Life, GOD has not forbid us the Use and Participation of them; but has commanded it, as far as 'tis agreeable to Reason, and to our true Interest. Religion does not prohibit any thing else but our Excesses in the Use of these Things, and prevents our Follies and Mistakes about them, and teaches us so to regulate ourselves in all our Enjoyments here, as to heighten our Pleasures, and make them more truly deserving that Name. And therefore,

Secondly,

SERM. III.

Secondly, HENCE we see the Reason why so many who profess Religion, and are sincere in this Profession, pass their Days so uncomfortably, are perpetually uneasy and disquieted, and reap so little Joy and Comfort from their Religion. All this arises from their Mistakes about Religion, and placing it either in Things which do not belong to it at all, and make no Part of it, or which are not the main and essential Ingredients of it, the Things wherein the Life and Power of it consist.

SOMETIMES Religion is distinguished from Virtue, and preferred before it: And then 'tis no Wonder that Men feel no Pleasure in their Religion, when 'tis destitute of Virtue, which is the only Thing that is valuable in Religion, and that carries its own Reward along with it. Much less can it be wondered, that They find no real Satisfaction in their Religion, who place it All in external Forms and Modes of Worship, and take up with the instrumental Parts of it, in a constant Round and Succession of outward Observances and Performances, without any Regard to the true End and Design of these Appointments,

SERM. III. pointments, *i. e.* to make the Comers thereunto really better. For this is the true Meaſure and Standard of Religion, the good Effect it has upon us. If our Religion does not make us really better, we cannot expect to be the happier for it. Theſe Two will keep an exact Proportion: And tho' we may poſſibly quiet ourſelves a little for the preſent, without any reall Amendment or Improvement; this is but a falſe Peace, and 'twill be in the Power of every little croſs Accident to break it.

SOME Men miſtake Superſtition for Religion; and This, inſtead of quieting their Conſciences, fills them with endleſs Fears and Scruples, and puts them upon ſuch Practices as GOD never required at their Hands, and which are, in their own Nature, more likely to provoke, than to pleaſe, his Divine Majeſty.

OTHERS place Religion in Melancholy and Mopiſhneſs, in Sequeſtring themſelves from the World, in bodily Exerciſe, in voluntary Acts of Abſtinence and Self-denial in the moſt lawful and innocent Matters; in impoſing Hardſhips and Severities upon themſelves, in literally mortifying the Body, and crucifying

ſying the Fleſh; like the Worſhippers of *Baal*, who cut themſelves after their Manner, with Knives and Lancets, till the *Blood guſhed out upon them*, 2 Kings xviii. 28. As if GOD was a cruel and revengeful Being, who envied the Happineſs of His Creatures, and took Delight in their Miſery and Torment. SERM. III.

WHEREAS 'tis certain that He wills the Happineſs of Mankind, and therefore enjoins them Holineſs, becauſe that is the only Way to Happineſs, as it is the only Way whereby we can reſemble Him, who is the Fountain of Happineſs.

AND therefore, ſince all theſe Severities may be undergone without mortifying any one Luſt or Paſſion, without advancing one Step in real Goodneſs; Since Men may deal thus ſeverely by themſelves, and yet be cruel and revengeful to others; ſince they may undergo all this Penance, and yet be as malicious and cenſorious, as proud and covetous, as ſenſual and worldly as ever; they cannot expect that this ſhould make any Acceſſion to their Happineſs, which adds nothing to their Virtues, or that they ſhould feel any of the Effects

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of Religion, when they are deſtitute of the Thing itſelf.

3. AND *Laſtly*, From the Whole, we may diſcern the true Cauſe of that Vanity and Vexation of Spirit, that Trouble and Uneaſineſs, that Labour and Sorrow which is to be found under the Sun.

WHEN we look abroad into the World, we find all Places full of Diſcontents and Complaints. They abound in the City and Country; neither Solitude nor Society can exclude them, nor any State and Condition of Life can exempt us from them. They aſcend the Thrones of Princes, and viſit the Palaces of the Nobles, and creep into the Cottages of the Poor; and like Death itſelf, are equally incident to Men of every Rank. But whence does this proceed? Is Man born to all this Trouble? Is it entailed upon him by the Great Author of his Being, and is there no avoiding it? How then ſhall we vindicate the Goodneſs of GOD in making Man? For if theſe Vexations be fatal and inevitable, moſt true is That Saying, *That it is better to die than live; and he who is not yet born, is in a better Condition than either.*

BUT

SERM. III.

BUT if there be any Truth in the foregoing Diſcourſe, if *a good Man ſhall be ſatisfied from himſelf*; This will juſtify our Great CREATOR, by ſhowing us that the true Reaſon why there is ſo little Satisfaction and Contentment, and ſo much Diſſatisfaction and Diſcontent to be found in the World, is becauſe there is ſo little Goodneſs, ſo little of true Religion and Virtue among us.

THAT there are many inevitable Occaſions of Trouble and Diſquiet, cannot be denied; that Poverty and Want, Pain and Sickneſs, are Evils, and ſo many Hindrances and Impediments to Happineſs, cannot be queſtioned by any Man who is in his Senſes. But then, why are *they* ſo unhappy who are free from theſe Things? What is the Ruſt that corrupts the Treaſures of the Rich? What is the Worm that preys upon the Gourd of the Wealthy, and makes it wither? In a word, what is it, that makes Thoſe inwardly uneaſy and diſcontented, who are outwardly proſperous and happy? I ſay, what is this, but the Want of true Virtue and Goodneſs, and that inward Self-ſatisfaction and Contentment which ariſes from thence? The Want

SERM. III. of this Comfort and Support, makes thoſe Afflictions and Miſeries which we meet with in this tranſitory World ſet ſo heavy upon us, and ſinks us under them. The Concluſion therefore of the whole Matter is This: That to fear GOD, and keep His Commandments, is the beſt Preſervative againſt the Evils of this Life, and the only Security from the Miſeries of the next.

2 Cor. vi. 10.

As having nothing, and yet poſſeſſing all Things.

SERM. IV.

THE Apoſtle in this Chapter gives the *Corinthians* an Account of his great Labours in the Goſpel, and how *in all Things he had approved himſelf as a Miniſter of God*, Ver. 3.

And in his own Character, he has given us the nobleſt Deſcription of the great Force and Efficacy of Chriſtian Virtues, which raiſed his Soul above all thoſe inferior Conſiderations which work ſo powerfully upon other Men.

He looked upon himſelf as a *new Creature in Chriſt Jeſus*, Chap. v. 17. and had no longer any Regard to the Things and Perſons of this World; but was able, by Virtue of thoſe Principles upon which he acted, to triumph over all thoſe Dan-

SERM. IV.

gers and Difficulties which were ſo frightful to other People; and to overcome all the Oppoſition which Men or Devils were able to make againſt him.

AND becauſe he was compelled to give this Commendation of himſelf, to juſtify and clear himſelf from thoſe Calumnies which the falſe Apoſtles had fixed upon him; he deſcends to ſome of thoſe Particulars with which he was charged. And the firſt he mentions, is the ſame which the *Jews* accuſed our SAVIOUR himſelf of, *i. e.* of being an Impoſtor and Deceiver; and ſo the Apoſtle ſays, he was repreſented as *a Deceiver, and yet true:* Or, as he elſewhere expreſſes it, *Truly the Signs of an Apoſtle were wrought among them; and* he *had ſpoke all Things to them in Truth,* 2 Cor. xii. 12. and vii. 14.

AGAIN, the Obſcurity of his Birth and Parentage, was another, and a very popular Objection, and calculated according to the vain Opinion of the World. *Can there any good Thing come out of* Nazareth? *Is not this the Carpenter's Son?* were the uſual Objections againſt our SAVIOUR: And ſo the Apoſtle was looked upon by his Enemies as a mean obſcure

ſcure Perſon; as *unknown*, and yet, he tells them, he was *well known* to all whom he had preached the Goſpel to; and had been remarkable beyond others in his abundant Labours in the Word and Doctrine. SERM. IV.

THUS does the Apoſtle defend himſelf againſt theſe falſe Accuſations; and, which is very obſervable, and well worthy our Imitation, he does not return Railing for Railing, nor retort theſe Objections upon his Adverſary: Which he might with great Juſtice and Truth have done; for he was really a falſe Apoſtle, and a Deceiver; a Man of no Worth or Note, but one who crept in privily, and deſigned to ſeduce Men ſecretly from the Truth. But he does not charge him with theſe Things, of which he was guilty; but only clears himſelf, and juſtifies his own Innocence.

AGAIN, He was reviled as one who lead a moſt wretched and miſerable Life; continually purſued and perſecuted, and expoſed to perpetual Sorrows and Sufferings; agreeably to our SAVIOUR's Character, of *a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Griefs; as one that was ſtricken, ſmitten of God and af-*

SERM. IV.

flicted, Iſaiah liii. 3, 4. To which the Apoſtle replies, That in all theſe Dangers he was preſerved by the Power of GOD, and delivered from Death; and was ſupported in his outward Diſtreſs by the comfortable Teſtimony of a good Conſcience, and an inward Senſe of GOD's Favour. *As dying, and yet behold we live; as chaſtened, and not killed; as ſorrowful, yet alway rejoycing.*

AND laſtly, His Poverty and low Condition, was objected as a Diminution of his Character; that he had left all, to follow a Maſter who Himſelf had not where to lay His Head.

TO this the Apoſtle anſwers; That, though he was reputed poor and indigent, according to the common Opinion of the World, yet he had the true Riches committed to his Truſt, by diſpenſing of which, he had enriched others; and though he had few or none of the Things of this World, yet he poſſeſſed them all. *As poor*, (ſays he) *yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet poſſeſſing all Things.*

THESE Words are a Part of that Character or Deſcription which St. *Paul* is here giving of himſelf; and they preſent

ſent us with ſome of the glorious Ef- SERM.
fects which true Chriſtian Principles IV.
firmly believed, and cloſely purſued, had upon Him, and will have upon all who are like minded with him. Which cannot but ſeem a ſtrange Contradiction, and ſound very harſh in the Ears of thoſe Men, who are ſo wedded to this World, that they meaſure their Happineſs by their outward Poſſeſſions, and have no Notion of any other Riches but what ariſes from theſe external and ſenſible Things. And therefore they cannot conceive it poſſible for a Man to poſſeſs more, than what he really has, is a legal Owner, and actual Maſter of: And by their covetous Temper, make good the Reverſe of the Apoſtle's Character; and though they poſſeſs never ſo much, yet reckon that they have nothing, nothing in Compariſon of what they would willingly have.

In order therefore to our better Satisfaction in this Matter,

I SHALL make it my preſent Buſineſs to account for, and explain this Saying of the Apoſtle's; and then make a brief Application

SERM. IV. Application in some short Inferences and Observations from the Whole.

1. THE Apostle possessed all Things, by possessing those which were of the greatest Value and truest Worth; Not the false and deceitful Mammon, the vain and empty Wealth of this World, which is so much admired, and so eagerly pursued by the Children of this World: But the true and substantial Riches, the Riches of the Mind, Innocence and Virtue, and all the Graces of a Christian Life.

THEY that place their Happiness in these outward Things, and while they are intent upon heaping up Riches, neglect *the one Thing needful*, the furnishing their Minds with Piety and Virtue, and the laying up in Store for themselves *there* a good Foundation for the Time to come; will find themselves miserably deceived, and in the same Condition with the Church of *Laodicea*, who said, and to be sure thought so too, That *she was rich and increased with Goods, and had need of nothing; and knew not that she was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked.*

Rev. iii. 17.

FOR

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FOR the Things of this World are inſufficient for our Happineſs, and we want ſomething much greater and better for our Comfort and Support.

FOR, beſides that great Uncertainty which all theſe Things are ſubject to, and which renders our Happineſs, ſo far as 'tis placed in them, precarious and uncertain too; were they enſured to us beyond the Reach of Time or Chance, they are unable to afford us any true and ſolid Satisfaction. The Mind of Man is too great and capacious, to be filled and contented with theſe earthly Treaſures; it feels within itſelf Deſires which this World cannot ſatisfy, and Longings after ſomething no where to be found.

SO that amidſt the greateſt Plenty and Affluence of earthly Things, the Soul which is of a Divine Original, is ſtill poor and naked, and has nothing whereon to reſt or fix.

BUT then, if inſtead of theſe worldly Things which are foreign to the Soul, we would take care to furniſh it with its own proper and native Goods, with Piety and Virtue, with holy and heavenly Diſpoſitions; it would then be

able

SERM. IV. able to reflect with Satisfaction and Joy upon its own Stock of Wealth, and feed upon that hidden Manna which our SAVIOUR has promised, *Rev.* ii. 17, to those *that overcome the World*; *i.* e. the inward Comforts and Refreshments of His HOLY SPIRIT.

THE Wise Man tells us, *Prov.* xiv. 14. That *a Good Man shall be satisfied from himself.* He has a never failing Spring of Comfort arising from himself; and as it would be in vain, so 'tis altogether needless for him to look abroad for his Happiness. He possesses all Things in himself, and nothing can make him greater than he is, nothing richer, nothing happier, but Heaven.

2. AS the Apostle possessed all Things in his own Innocence and Integrity, his Piety and Virtue; so he did likewise in that which is a necessary Consequence of this, in the Satisfaction and Contentment of his Mind.

A GOOD Man cannot but be contented with his Condition whatever it be, and rest satisfied with the Dispensations of Providence towards him; and this is the greatest Gain, and truest Riches of any.

THE

THE Apoſtle, 1 *Tim.* iv. 6. has joined theſe two together, and determined this to be the Caſe. *Godlineſs with Contentment is great Gain.* This enriches us beyond all our other Poſſeſſions, and ſupplies the Want of every Thing elſe. SERM. IV.

AND therefore if we conſider how great a Maſter St. *Paul* was of this great Virtue; how he had learned in whatſoever State he was, therewith to be content; and knew both how to be abaſed, and how to abound, and was in all Things inſtructed both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound and ſuffer Want; and in all the Changes of theſe outward Things, could *poſſeſs his Soul* in Patience, maintain the Calm and Repoſe of his Mind, and continue the ſame Man under the greateſt Contrarieties of Events:

I SAY, if we conſider how perfect the Apoſtle was in this excellent Leſſon, we ſhould have no Reaſon to wonder how he could ſay, That *though he had Nothing, yet he poſſeſſed all Things.*

FOR Contentment is that happy Leveller, which renders all Conditions equal, and reconciles us to every Thing

that

SERM. IV. that befalls us. It raiſes the Poor out of the Duſt, and gives a Reliſh to the coarſeſt Fare. It ſweetens every Condition of Life, and exalts thoſe of low Degree. It is the greateſt Riches, and makes us rich in Deſpite of the World, and that by the ſhorteſt and ſafeſt Method; not by enlarging our Eſtates beyond what they are, which may be out of our Power to do; but by contracting our Deſires, which is in our own Power, and bringing them within the Compaſs of what we have.

AND what greater Riches can there be, than to want Nothing? And what more can He want, who is content with what he already has? who thinks That enough which he has, be it little or much; and does not deſire to live higher, or die richer than he is.

HE may indeed be without many Things which other People have; but he cannot be ſaid to want them, any more than the Angels in Heaven want theſe groſs earthly Things which we cannot live without here, becauſe their Condition ſtands not in Need of ſuch Things, and they are well without them. So the contented Man wants none of

thoſe

thoſe Things which he is without, nor is ever the more poor, or leſs happy, for want of them; becauſe he has learned to live without them, and can with Eaſe bear their Abſence. SERM. IV.

FOR, as our Bleſſed SAVIOUR has told us, *A Man's Life*, (*i. e.* the Happineſs of a Man's Life) *conſiſteth not in the Abundance of the Things which he poſſeſſes.*

IF this were not ſo; we muſt then ſeek for Happineſs only in King's Palaces, and amongſt the great and rich Men of this World; and the Cottage would be left deſtitute of it, and the Poor *of all Men the moſt miſerable.*

BUT this is far from being the Caſe; Riches conſiſt rather in the Fewneſs of our Wants, than the Abundance of our Poſſeſſions; nor is there any neceſſary Connexion between this Abundance and Happineſs.

HAPPINESS is not confined to any particular State or Condition of Life; becauſe it does not depend upon theſe outward Things, but upon the Temper and Diſpoſition of our Minds, and conſiſts in inward Peace and Tranquillity.

WHERE a Man is ſatisfied with his Condition, and content with ſuch Things as

SERM. IV. as he has; tho' his Condition be never ſo mean, and the Things he is Maſter of but few and inconſiderable; yet he poſſeſſes more in what he has, and has a truer Enjoyment of himſelf, than he, who, tho' his Fortune is never ſo plentiful, is diſſatisfied with his Condition, and ſtill wants ſomething more than what what he has.

FOR while he is eagerly purſuing after ſomething which he has not, he overlooks and forgets all that he has, and reaps no more Pleaſure from it than if he had it not. The Taſte and Reliſh of what he has, is ſpoiled by his continual Thirſting after ſomething which he wants: Which if he had, he would ſtill be as far from Happineſs as ever; becauſe He that is not ſatisfied with his preſent Condition, will always find ſome Matter or other of Complaint.

WHEREAS the poor Man, who is contented with his Condition, and looks out no farther; and does not diſquiet himſelf with uneaſy Deſires, nor loſe any thing of that little which he has, for Want of ſomething which he has not; is richer in his Poverty, than the other is in his Abundance.

IN

In which Senſe the Words of the Wiſe Man are true, *Prov.* xiii. 7. *There is that maketh himſelf poor, yet hath great Riches: There is that maketh himſelf rich, yet hath nothing.* Or in the Words of the Text, *As having Nothing, and yet poſſeſſing all Things.* SERM. III.

3. The Apoſtle poſſeſſed all Things in the Moderation of his Deſires, and the Maſtery he had over his inferior Appetites and Paſſions.

He could confine his Deſires within modeſt Bounds, and ſatisfy himſelf with the bare Neceſſaries, without the Pomp and Pride, of Life.

And this, though it be one great Branch of Contentment, yet ſince Contentment is a Virtue which is neceſſary to our Happineſs in every State, and has its Uſe in Plenty as well as in Poverty; and this Moderation of our Appetites, and Bounding our worldly Views within a narrow Compaſs, is in a more particular Manner uſeful in a low and mean Condition of Life, ſuch as the Apoſtle's was; it will deſerve a diſtinct Conſideration.

This Saying of the Apoſtle's, That *though he had Nothing, yet he poſſeſſed*

SERM. IV.

all Things; cannot but ſeem a groſs Contradiction to worldly Men, who do not think they have any thing, but what they are actually poſſeſſed of, and can call their own in a legal Senſe; and want every Thing which is not thus within their Reach, and at their own Diſpoſal. Who (as the Prophet deſcribes them, *Hab.* ii. 5.) *enlarge their Deſire as Hell, and are as Death and the Grave which cannot be ſatisfied; but gather unto them all Nations, and heap unto them all People.* Who are for graſping at every Thing they ſee, and would have all the World their own; and yet count nothing ſo, but what is actually in their own Hands. *Who join Houſe to Houſe, and lay Field to Field, till there be no Place, that they may be placed alone in the midſt of the Earth,* Iſa. v. 8.

NOW ſuch People as theſe can never, with all their Endeavours, poſſeſs all Things; becauſe there will always be a great many Things, which no particular Perſon can be thus Maſter of.

BUT the Apoſtle's Way of enriching himſelf, and enlarging his Poſſeſſions, is much more eaſy and compendious; while

while he eſtimates Things after other Meaſures, and reckons not only thoſe Things his own which he has, but thoſe alſo which he has no Uſe for, and can want without any Detriment to himſelf, or Diminution of his Happineſs. Who looks upon the whole World as his own, becauſe he enjoys as much of it as he has Occaſion for; and ſo poſſeſſes even what he has not, by having all the true Ends and real Uſes of Poſſeſſion, the Neceſſaries and Conveniencies of Life. SERM. IV.

FOR Poſſeſſion is no more than an empty Name, without applying it to ſome real Benefit and Advantage: And therefore we are to meaſure our Poſſeſſions, not by the Number of the Things we poſſeſs, but by the Wants we have to ſupply: And he that has enough to ſupply his Wants, and anſwer the juſt Demands of Nature, is as rich as this World can make him.

AND the Way to this Wealth is (as I ſaid before) not by minding high Things, but by moderating our Deſires, and reducing them into ſober and reaſonable Bounds: Not by endeavouring to get as many of the good Things of

SERM. III.

this World as we can; but by ſtudying to want as few as we can. For when our Wants are few, a few Things will ſerve our Turn, and they may be quickly and eaſily obtained.

ALL Places are full of GOD's Bleſſings, ſo very full that we cannot tell where He ſhould beſtow more. So that we need not go far to ſeek enough. For there can be no Scarcity of a Competency: And the wiſe Son of *Sirach* tells us, That *a very little is ſufficient for a Man well nurtured*, Eccluſ. xxxi. 19.

WE do not naturally ſtand in need of a great many Things, either for our Being or Well-being in this World. Men, I know, have ſtrangely multiplied their Wants, and created to themſelves a great many which are unnatural, and which they did not bring with them into the World: But that is their own Fault.

OUR Appetites are very modeſt of themſelves: A ſmall Portion of Nature's Goods will ſuffice them, and be a full Meal. All the true Wants, and even innocent Pleaſures of Life, are within Reach of a private Fortune and ordinary Contrivance, and do by no Means

Means require large Poſſeſſions to ſupport them. SERM. IV.

THE Apoſtle reduces them to a very ſmall Compaſs; 1 *Tim.* vi. 8. *and having Food and Rayment, let us be therewith content.* And the wiſe *Hebrew* tells us, That *the chief Things for Life, is Water, and Bread, and Clothing, and a Houſe to cover Shame,* Eccluſ. xxix. 21.

AND he that has learned to live after that ſimple Manner, which Nature, before 'tis corrupted and depraved, preſcribes and delights in, and can bring his Deſires and Appetites to this Standard, poſſeſſes as much and more than he that has the largeſt Revenues. He has all the real Uſe and Benefit of a great Eſtate; and the other has nothing elſe but that, which 'tis better to want than have, the Care and Trouble, the Vanity and Vexation that attends it.

THE Encreaſe of our Fortune beyond our real Wants, is but an Addition to our Trouble. For the moſt that the greateſt Eſtate can do for us, is but to furniſh us with Things that are fitting and convenient; and all that we have beſides this, makes us not the richer or happier, any more than

SERM. IV. the Burden does the Sumpter that bears it.

BUT this is not the worſt of the Caſe. For ſince Riches conſiſt in the Proportion which our outward Poſſeſſions bear to our inward Wants and Deſires: he whoſe Poſſeſſions are large, and by his luxurious Living has contracted a great many vain and needleſs Wants, which by long Cuſtom are as importunate to be ſupplied, and as uneaſy when they are unſatisfied, as the real and regular Wants of Nature; This Man I ſay is poorer, than he that has nothing in Compariſon to thoſe Treaſures. For though his Fortunes be narrow, yet ſince his Wants and Deſires are ſo too, this brings Matters to an Equality. For where is the Difference between having much, and wanting ſtill more; and having little, but yet not wanting more or ſo much as we have? The latter of the two is certainly the beſt Condition, and bids the faireſt for Happineſs.

FOR That Wandring of Deſire, which the Preacher condemns, is endleſs, *Eccleſ.* vi. 9. And therefore the Pſalmiſt's Caution is very ſeaſonable, *If Riches encreaſe*

encreaſe, ſet not your Heart upon them. SERM. IV.

HE knew that this was too commonly the Effect of great Riches, that they were rather apt to heighten and enflame, than appeaſe and ſatisfy our Deſires.

AND he that has never ſo much, and yet thinks it too little for his Ends and Purpoſes, has not ſo much as he, that is not Maſter of the Tithe of his Revenue, and yet thinks it enough.

HE that enlarges his worldly Projects and Deſigns with his Condition, and ſuffers his Deſires to grow together with his Subſtance, or, which is oftner the Caſe, to out-grow it: This Man has as little, and always will have, as he had at his firſt ſetting out; and though he has never ſo much, yet in Reality he poſſeſſes nothing, and wants not only what he has not, but even what he has.

THIS then is another Way whereby we may account for this Saying of the Apoſtle's. He had the Command of himſelf, and the Maſtery over his Paſſions. He could confine his Appetites within the Bounds of Nature and

SERM. IV. Reaſon, and ſuit his Deſires to his preſent State and Condition. He knew how to ſuffer Want, and be without thoſe Things which he could not obtain; and though he had nothing, yet as long as he wanted none of thoſe Things which he was without, he might well ſay that he poſſeſſed all Things.

4. ANOTHER Way whereby the Apoſtle, when he had nothing, poſſeſſed all Things; was, by that firm Truſt and Confidence which he put in the Good Providence of GOD.

ONE Reaſon why Men are ſo intent upon the World, though they are not willing to own it, is a ſecret Infidelity and Diſtruſt of GOD. They are deſirous, if it be poſſible, to lay ſuch a Foundation as Time cannot wear away, nor Winds and Tempeſts overthrow. They would willingly be above the Reach of all the Changes and Chances of this World, and do not care to truſt Providence, till they think themſelves ſecure from it, and even in a Condition to defy it.

AND hence it is that they betray ſuch an immoderate Concern and Solicitude

licitude for the future, ſuch anxious Cares and Fears as to what ſhall hereafter befall them; while they are as hot in their Purſuits after the Things of this World, as if they were the chiefeſt Good; and heap up ſuch immenſe Treaſures, as if they were to live here for ever. SERM. IV.

Now though a provident Care for the future be very commendable; yet this Anxiety and Sollicitude can never be juſtified. For after we have done all that is in our Power, we muſt ſtill repoſe our Truſt in Providence, and depend more upon the Divine Protection, than all the Proviſion we are able to make ourſelves, for our own Security.

'Tis GOD that gives a Bleſſing to our Endeavours after the Things of this World, and makes them ſucceſsful; 'Tis He that *gives Man Power to get Wealth.* And when we have got it, 'tis His Providence that preſerves it; nay, 'tis He that gives us an Heart to make uſe of it, and render it ſerviceable for thoſe Ends we deſigned it. And what an unreaſonable Jealouſy is it, what an abſurd Contradiction, not to truſt

SERM. IV. truſt Him to provide for us, without whoſe Help we cannot either get, or keep, even that wherein we are willing to truſt?

AND after all, 'tis wretched Folly to flatter ourſelves with vain Hopes of ſuch a Security as is no where to be found on this Side Heaven; and to imagine that any Proviſions we are able to make, can hold out againſt the unavoidable Accidents of Human Life, or be Proof againſt an Almighty Power.

A great Eſtate is not leſs, but more liable to Miſcarriages than a ſmall one; and the Greatneſs of it, is many times the Occaſion of its Ruin, by raiſing the Envy of wicked Men, and tempting them with ſo fair a Bait; while they paſs by meaner Fortunes, and do not think them worth contending for.

BUT be that as it will; 'tis certain that none of theſe Things are any Security againſt the Hand of GOD. He can blaſt the greateſt Fortune, as ſoon as the meaneſt; and in a Moment diſperſe all that which we have ſpent our whole Lives in Gathering together. And there is nothing ſo likely to provoke Him to deal thus with us, as this Temper. *Wo*

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to him that coveteth an evil Covetouſ-neſs to his Houſe, that he may ſet his Neſt on high, that he may be delivered from the Power of Evil. To which the Sentence pronounced upon *Edom* is applicable, *The Pride of thine Heart hath deceived thee: Thou that dwelleſt in the Clefts of the Rock, whoſe Habitation is high; that ſaith in his Heart, Who ſhall bring me down to the Ground? Though thou exalt thyſelf as the Eagle, and though thou ſet thy Neſt among the Stars, thence will I bring thee down, ſaith the* LORD.

SERM. IV.

Hab. ii. 9.

Obad. 3, 4.

So that how prudent ſoever Men may think themſelves in thus Foreſtalling Providence, and providing for themſelves without it: *This their Way, is their Folly.* And well were it, if Folly was the worſt Name which this Humour deſerved; For it is no leſs Impiety than Folly. For what can be more wicked, than amidſt ſo many undeniable Proofs of a GOD and His Providence, to let the ſame anxious Cares and jealous Fears fill and diſturb our Minds, as if we were ſure there were neither? What greater Affront can we offer the Wiſdom and Power, the Fidelity and Goodneſs

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SERM. IV. Goodneſs of GOD, than to refuſe to caſt any of our Care upon Him, and endeavour to provide for ourſelves without Him, when He has not only promiſed to take care of us, but even preſſes us to rely upon him?

Matth. vi. OUR Bleſſed SAVIOUR condemns this anxious and diſtruſtful Temper: And the Arguments he makes uſe of to diſſuade us from it, are drawn from the Conſideration of GOD's Kindneſs to us in greater Inſtances than any of the Things of this World, in giving us Life and Being, which is the Foundation of all our temporal Enjoyments; *Is not the Life more than Meat, and the Body than Rayment?* From GOD's Care and Providence over other Creatures, by far inferior to us; *Behold the Fowls of the Air*, and *conſider the Lillies of the Field*. From the Vanity and Fruitleſneſs of this immoderate Concern, which will not help us to any of thoſe Things which we covet, nor in the leaſt better our Condition: *Which of you by taking Thought can add one Cubit to his Stature?* Nay, it will rather make our Condition worſe, by imbittering our preſent Enjoyments with the Thoughts of

of future Wants; and encreaſing our preſent Troubles, by anticipating thoſe of to Morrow; and taking Poſſeſſion of Evils which are yet to come. SERM. IV.

TAKE *therefore no Thought for the Morrow; for the Morrow ſhall take Thought for the Things of itſelf: ſufficient unto the Day, is the Evil thereof.*

IF our Wants are at preſent ſupplied, we have no Reaſon to doubt but they will be ſo for the future, tho' we have nothing ready at hand to do it.

IF we believe there is a GOD, we cannot but reſt aſſured, that He will take care of his Creatures. He is every where preſent; and which Way ſoever we turn, we are ſurrounded with innumerable Inſtances of his Goodneſs and Power, of his Readineſs and Ability to help us.

HE is All-ſufficient; and of his Fullneſs we have all received. And from our former Experience of what He has done for us, we may learn to truſt Him for the future.

THERE can be Nothing wanting where GOD is. And therefore though we are often reduced to ſuch Straits, that

SERM. IV. that we cannot diſcern any Poſſibility of Deliverance, He can eaſily make a Way for us to eſcape, or enable us to bear it.

GOOD is the Word which the LORD hath ſpoken, That He *will never leave us nor forſake us*: And we may ſecurely rely upon Him, that it ſhall be unto us according to his Word.

IN the greateſt Appearance of Danger, amidſt all the Difficulties which can befal us, when all human Succours fail, and we are wholly at a Loſs, and know not what will become of us; we may ſafely caſt all our Care upon GOD, becauſe we know He careth for us.

THIS was the Temper of holy Men of Old, and thus did they live and rely upon the Providence of GOD.

ABRAHAM, who for his exceeding great Eminency in this Virtue, obtained the Titles of the *Father of the Faithful*, and the *Friend of* GOD; when he was called upon to leave his Country, and his Kindred, and his Father's Houſe, and go out into a Place which he ſhould after receive for an Inheritance; obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went, *Heb.* xi. 8.

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HE firmly believed the Promiſe of GOD; and That in a Matter, which was in itſelf and to all human Appearance highly improbable; which the Apoſtle expreſſes in very emphatical Words, *Rom.* iv. 18. *Who againſt Hope, believed in Hope.* SERM. IV.

AND the Royal Pſalmiſt expreſſes the greateſt Confidence in GOD, in the moſt difficult and dangerous Times. *God is our Hope and Strength; a very preſent Help in Trouble: therefore will we not fear though the Earth be moved, and though the Hills be carried into the midſt of the Sea.*

AND, which is ſtill more to our preſent Purpoſe: the Prophet *Habbakuk*, *Chap.* iii. *Verſes* 17, 18. carries his Faith in GOD to the higheſt Pitch imaginable, and ſuppoſes the utmoſt Extremity that could poſſibly happen, even a total Failure of Nature, an univerſal Famine and Want of the neceſſary Supports of Life; and yet even in this Condition he could depend upon GOD for Relief.

ALTHOUGH *the Fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall Fruit be in the Vines, the Labour of the Olive ſhall fail, and the Fields ſhall yield no Meat, the Flock*

SERM. IV. *ſhall be cut off from the Fold, and there ſhall be no Herd in the Stalls: yet I will rejoyce in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Confidence.*

THOUGH all Creatures ſhould fail us, we may ſafely rely upon GOD, and live upon His All-ſufficiency for our Supply.

AND it was on this holy Dependance upon GOD's Providence that St. *Paul* had fixed and ſettled his Mind. This was that Anchor of his Soul, both ſure and ſtedfaſt, from which neither Honour nor Diſhonour, neither Want nor Abundance, neither Things preſent nor Things to come, nor all the Storms and Tempeſts of an uncertain World, could drive him away.

HE could never be moved or daunted by any evil Tidings, while his Heart was thus fixed, and his Truſt placed in the LORD.

AND therefore while he thus held himſelf faſt by his GOD, and relied upon the Care and Protection of His Good Providence, he could have no Apprehenſions of Want; and might well ſay, that *though he had Nothing, yet he poſſeſſed all Things.*

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5. THE Apoſtle poſſeſſed all Things in his future Hopes and Expectations, in that exceeding great and glorious Reward which was reſerved for him in Heaven. SERM. IV.

'TIS recorded of *Moſes*, That he refuſed to be called the Son of *Pharaoh*'s Daughter; chooſing rather to ſuffer Affliction with the People of GOD, than to enjoy the Pleaſures of Sin for a Seaſon; eſteeming the Reproach of CHRIST greater Riches than the Treaſures of *Egypt*. And becauſe it might be wondered at, upon what Reaſons and Motives he acted thus; the next Words give us an Account what it was that encouraged him to make ſo ſtrange a Choice: *For he had Reſpect unto the Recompence of Reward.*

THE true Reaſon why Men are ſo deeply affected, and ſo eaſily overcome by theſe preſent and ſenſible Things, is, becauſe they do not labour to ſtrengthen and ſtir up their Faith with reſpect to Things future and inviſible.

IF we were but rich in a firm Faith and Belief of thoſe Things, we ſhould never eſteem ourſelves poor in theſe outward Poſſeſſions, nor ſhould we much mat-

SERM. IV.

ter how much, or how little of them fell to our Share. We ſhould be ſo full of the Thoughts of Eternal Bliſs and Happineſs, that other Things would find no Room in our Breaſts, nor ſhould we think them worth contending for, while we were in Purſuit of ſuch a Noble Prize.

THESE were the Sentiments of this Apoſtle; who, *Phil.* iii. 7, 8, &c. tells us, That *what Things were Gain to him, thoſe he counted Loſs for Chriſt. Yea doubtleſs* (ſays he) *and I count all Things but Loſs, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord: for whom I have ſuffered the Loſs of all Things, and do count them but Dung that I may win Chriſt.*

AND that he ſpeaks here with Reſpect to his future Inheritance, is evident from the next Words, where he prays to *be found in him, not having his own Righteouſneſs which is of the Law, but that which is of the Faith of Chriſt, the Righteouſneſs which is of God by Faith: That I may know him, and the Power of his Reſurrection, and the Fellowſhip of his Sufferings, being made conformable unto his Death, if by any*

any Means I might attain unto the Re- SERM.
ſurrection of the Dead. IV.

THIS was the great End he aimed at, and which he had continually in his View: And while he was *reaching forth unto thoſe Things which are before*, he left all theſe earthly Things behind him, and preſſed *toward the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus*, Ver. 13, 14.

HE left it to others to ſweat and toil for the Wealth and Grandeur of this World, while he made it his chief Care to enſure to himſelf in Heaven, a better and a more enduring Subſtance. He envied none the Reputation of Skill and Cunning in the Management of their ſecular Concerns, but thought himſelf wiſe enough if he could but be ſaved, and great enough, if by any Means he could but attain unto the Reſurrection of the Juſt.

WHILE other People were intent upon the Buſineſs and Pleaſures of this Life, and were wholly wrapped up in their worldly Poſſeſſions, he ſat looſe from all theſe Things, and could content himſelf without them. *Even unto this preſent Hour*, ſays he, *we both hunger* 1 Cor. iv. 11.

SERM. IV. *and thirſt, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain Dwelling-place.* But all theſe Diſadvantages were abundantly recompenced by that certain Proſpect he had, of the Joys and Glories of another Life.

WHILE his Hopes were thus full of Immortality, he could without any Difficulty bear, or rather he could not feel, the Want of theſe temporal Things. He poſſeſſed all that he wanted or deſired, in the Expectations he had of Heaven and Happineſs; and in the greateſt Poverty could entertain himſelf with the Contemplation of glorious Truths, and live upon the Hopes of a joyful Reſurrection. This ſupported him not only under all the Troubles of Life, but under Death itſelf; and made him reſign his Soul not only with Patience and Submiſſion but even with Joy and Triumph.

FOR thus we find him expreſſing himſelf, 2 *Tim.* iv. 6, 7. *For I am now ready to be offered, and the Time of my Departure is at Hand. I have fought the good Fight, I have finiſhed my Courſe, I have kept the Faith. Henceforth is laid up for me a Crown of Righteouſneſs,*

Righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righ- SERM.
teous Judge ſhall give me at that Day. IV.

WHAT a firm Faith, and holy Confidence is here! He ſpeaks with ſuch a lively Senſe, as if he ſaw the Heavens opened, and had his Crown in his View, and was juſt ready to lay hold of it, and receive it from his SAVIOUR's Hands.

AND ſince he ſays, that this *Crown of Righteouſneſs, the Lord the righteous Judge ſhall give at that Day, not unto him only, but unto all them alſo that love his Appearing*: how can any true Chriſtian who has ſuch glorious Expectations, be dejected or diſmayed at any Thing which befalls him here? How ſhould the Conſideration of this great Reward raiſe us above all theſe worldly Projects and Deſigns; and how mean and contemptible muſt all Things here below appear, when compared with thoſe Things which are above, and that Glory which ſhall there be revealed?

OUR Citizenſhip is in Heaven, and we are but Strangers and Pilgrims here on Earth, where we have no continuing City, nor any ſettled and laſting

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Abode. This World is but the Paſſage to our Heavenly Country, whither when we are arrived, we ſhall enter into the Joy of our LORD, a State of compleat and endleſs Happineſs; where all our Wants will be ſupplied, all our former Miſery and Trouble forgot, and all Tears wiped from our Eyes.

HOW then can we be poor, who *have an Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved for us in Heaven?* How ill does it become Him to complain of Want, or be diſcontented with his Condition here, who is a Son of GOD, and an Heir of Heaven, and has Crowns and Sceptres in his View!

IF we would but ſet our Hearts and Affections upon Heaven where our Treaſure is, and keep our Eye fixed upon our Reward, and by Faith behold our SAVIOUR ſitting at the Right Hand of GOD, ready to receive his Faithful Servants when they go hence; we could not be concerned at any Thing that befell us here, or deſire any Thing more than what we ſhall there poſſeſs; but in the greateſt Want and Diſtreſs, we might ſay with the Apoſtle, That

though

though we had Nothing, yet we poſſeſſed all Things. SERM. IV.

AND thus I have endeavoured to account for this Saying of the Apoſtle's; and have ſhown you, how, and in what Senſe, when *he had Nothing, he poſſeſſed all Things.* I come now in the

SECOND Place to make ſome Application of what has been ſaid, in ſome brief Obſervations or Inferences from the Whole. And,

1. IF we poſſeſs all Things as the Apoſtle did, in poſſeſſing the true Riches, the Riches of the Mind; if we can bring ourſelves to this Temper, to reckon Godlineſs the greateſt Gain, and ſet the higheſt Value upon this inward Wealth: We ſhall reap this conſiderable Advantage by it, that we ſhall poſſeſs what we have: And what greater or better Circumſtance can we have than this! We ſhall poſſeſs it, I ſay, with Certainty, and without any Poſſibility of having it taken from us.

AND this ought greatly to recommend theſe Riches to us.

FOR if the Children of this World who are ſo wiſe in their Generation,

SERM. IV. are moſt deſirous of ſuch Poſſeſſions as are leaſt liable to Caſualties and Uncertainties, and not ſo much in Danger of being loſt or taken from them: How much greater Value ought we to ſet upon Virtue and Goodneſs, and how much more diligent ought we to be in the Purſuit of Them; ſince they are Poſſeſſions of the moſt fixed and durable Nature, and of which we have the ſureſt Hold.

THERE are as many Ways of Loſing, as of Getting the Riches of this World; and though ſome Things are not ſo much expoſed as others, yet there are none above the Reach of Danger, but Time and Chance happeneth to them all.

WE may be cheated out of our Eſtate by Fraud, or robbed of it by Violence; or if nothing of this Kind befalls us, there are innumerable other Ways, whereby we may be ſtripped of theſe outward Poſſeſſions. For they have a Principle of Corruption in them, and are of their own Nature ſubject to Decay; and the Wiſe Man tells us, That *Riches make to themſelves Wings, and fly away as an Eagle towards Heaven.*

Proverbs xxiii. 5.

BUT

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BUT our Integrity and Righteouſneſs we may hold faſt, and not let it go; And *in the Covetouſneſs of ſuch as oppreſs us, This will ſtand by us, and make us rich. It will defend us from our Enemies, and keep us ſafe from thoſe that lie in wait, and in all our Conflicts will give us the Victory, that we may know that Godlineſs is ſtronger than all*; as the wiſe *Hebrew* expreſſes it, *Wiſdom* X. 11, 12.

So that theſe are the moſt durable and laſting Riches, and which we may moſt truly call our own, and which will afford us the trueſt Comfort and Satisfaction.

WE are not only ſure of them when we have them; but we have this Encouragement to labour after them, that we know that we labour for that which will really profit us, and which when we have gained, we ſhall not feel the Want of other Things; but though we have nothing, ſhall in them poſſeſs all Things.

2. WHAT has been ſaid may ſerve to teach us how to ſecure our Happineſs, and make it conſiſtent with whatever Chances

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Chances may here befall us in our outward State and Condition.

FOR 'tis not the Things themſelves ſo much as our Opinions concerning them, that occaſions all our Trouble and Vexation about them. We ſet too great a Value upon them, and imagine a great deal more in them than there is; and this makes us uneaſy when we want them, and diſappointed when we have them.

WHEREAS if we did not over-rate them, neither ſhould we be over eager in the Purſuit of them; but as they are in themſelves of an indifferent Nature, and do no way affect our Supreme Happineſs, ſo we ſhould uſe them with Chriſtian Indifference and Moderation.

1 Cor. viii. 8. FOR none of theſe Things recommend us to GOD: Neither if we have them, are we the better; neither if we have them not, are we ever the worſe. They neither make us when they come, nor mend us while they ſtay, nor undo us when they are taken from us.

AND if we would not think of theſe Things more highly than they deſerve; we ſhould not be ſo wedded to them, as not to be happy without them; but

ſhould place our Affections upon better Things, and reſt contented with any Portion of theſe which our Heavenly FATHER has allotted us. SERM. IV.

AND then we ſhould be able to præoccupate, and foreſtal the Blows of Fortune, and be beforehand with any Changes we could meet with here.

FOR what great Matter is it to be debarred that which we do not greatly value, and which we could as well forbid ourſelves? There is nothing taken away but what we could ſpare; nor do we want any Thing, but what we could want, even while we were in Poſſeſſion of it. So that as long as we are of this Temper, we cannot be affected by any Loſs; nor ſuffer much by having thoſe Things taken from us, which we beforehand choſe to enjoy with Indifferency and Reſignation.

3. HENCE we learn how greatly they are miſtaken, who place ſo much Perfection in a State of Poverty, and make it a neceſſary and eſſential Part of Chriſtianity to take up Vows and Reſolutions againſt all worldly Riches and Poſſeſſions.

As

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AS 'tis certainly no Fault to be Rich; so neither is it any Virtue to be Poor; but whatever our Condition be, Submission to GOD, and Self-surrender to His Will, is truly a Christian Virtue, and most acceptable in his Sight.

THE Apostle tells us how mean and bare his Condition was, *He had nothing at all*; But this was not that which recommended him to GOD; but his *possessing all Things*, even while *he had nothing*. It was his Poverty in Spirit, and not his Poverty in his outward Condition, in which his Perfection consisted, and which he recommends to our Imitation. He was entirely satisfied with his Condition, and did not covet the Riches or Grandeur of this World; but could content himself with a low Estate, without aspiring after higher Things, or being in the least uneasy for want of them.

HEREIN his Virtue consisted, and not in his outward Poverty and Want. For tho' a Man be naked and destitute of the Things of this World, he may yet inwardly covet and admire them, and be discontented and uneasy because he cannot have them; and then his Poverty avails him nothing; but is rather

an Hindrance than an Help to Perfection. SERM. IV.

AND on the contrary, he that abounds in the Riches of this World, may yet be poor in Spirit; and neither value his Riches, nor himſelf upon their Account; but amidſt all his Poſſeſſions, be as though he poſſeſſed not; in a conſtant Readineſs to reſign them, whenever GOD requires it. And this is all the Poverty which Religion enjoins us, and GOD will accept at our Hands.

FOR as to the bare Want of theſe Things, This may proceed from Neceſſity, and not Choice; and then there can be no Virtue in it. And if we chooſe to be without theſe Things, this is no Virtue, becauſe they were created for our Uſe, *and are to be received with Thankſgiving.*

ALL the Virtue lies in being able to want them with Patience, and uſe them with Moderation; to know, with the Apoſtle, both how to abound, and how to ſuffer Want. For both States have their Difficulties and Temptations: The Rich to Pride and Inſolence; and the Poor to Baſeneſs and Meanneſs. And 'tis not eaſy

to

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to determine which of the two is the moſt eligible Condition, and leaſt expoſed to Danger. And therefore inſtead of running the Hazard of either of theſe Extreams, wiſe *Agur*'s Prayer ſeems to be moſt prudent as well as pious, and will beſt become every Chriſtian to put up to GOD in his own Behalf, *Prov.* xxx. 7, 8, 9. *Two Things have I required of thee, deny me them not before I die: Remove from me Vanity, and Lies; give me neither Poverty, nor Riches; feed me with Food convenient for me; leſt I be full, and deny thee, and ſay, Who is the Lord? Or leſt I be poor, and ſteal, and take the Name of my God in vain.*

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MARK xvi. 16.

He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damned.

OUR SAVIOUR having, in the foregoing Verſe, given Commiſſion for the Univerſal Propagation of His Goſpel; declares in the Text, what will be the Conſequence of Mens receiving or rejecting it. *He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damned.* Which Words naturally lead me to make theſe two Enquiries.

I. WHAT that Belief is, which the Goſpel requires in order to Salvation.

II. WHAT

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II. WHAT that Unbelief is, which will condemn us in the laſt Day.

THE Conſideration of which Points will furniſh us in the Third and Laſt Place with ſeveral uſeful Leſſons and Inſtructions.

I. *What* that *Belief* is, which the Goſpel requires in order to Salvation.

AND That muſt be ſomething more than a ſpeculative Belief, or a bare Aſſent of the Mind to the Truth of the Goſpel. For as there is no Virtue in This, ſo neither can it deſerve any Reward. Mere ſimple Belief, or Unbelief, is no Matter of Choice, nor at all dependent upon our Wills, but upon the Strength or Weakneſs of the Evidence which we have for the Things which we believe, or disbelieve.

WHERE we have full Evidence for the Truth of any Thing, we cannot with-hold our Aſſent; and where we want Evidence, we cannot give it. We may heſitate, and doubt, or be in Suſpenſe, but we cannot believe. In all which, the Mind is purely paſſive, and

is

is acted upon; and 'tis no more in our Power to alter our Opinions, than 'tis to change our Complexions, or add to our Stature. SERM. V.

THUS far therefore there can be no Virtue in Believing. For if there be ſuch Evidence for the Truth of the Goſpel, as the Mind cannot reſiſt when 'tis fairly laid before it; our believing it, is not only natural but neceſſary, and what we cannot poſſibly help.

BUT though we cannot help believing upon ſufficient Evidence, yet we may chooſe whether we will uſe our beſt Endeavours to come to the Knowledge of the Truth, whether we will examine the Proofs that are brought for it; and when our Judgment is convinced of it, whether we will ſuffer it to go forth unto Victory, and let it influence and govern our Practice.

HEREIN then the Virtue, and, in an improper Senſe, the Merit of Faith begins; in a ready and willing Diſpoſition of Mind to hearken to Reaſon, and examine the Proofs which are brought for the Truth of thoſe Things which are propoſed to our Belief.

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THE Matter here propoſed to Mens Belief was the Truth of the Goſpel, which depended upon the Truth of our SAVIOUR's Reſurrection. They who knew our SAVIOUR, and were Eye-witneſſes of His Death, and ſaw Him after He was riſen, could not but believe it, without renouncing their Senſes, and deſtroying all Certainty whatever. But they who did not know our SAVIOUR, muſt go upon other Principles, and have ſome other Proof of this Matter, and depend upon the credible Report of thoſe who were Eye-witneſſes of it.

THAT this is ſufficient to perſuade Belief, is evident from what we read, *Ver.* 14. where we are told, that our SAVIOUR *appeared unto the Eleven, as they ſat at Meat, and upbraided them with their Unbelief and Hardneſs of Heart, becauſe they believed not them which had ſeen him after he was riſen.*

THEY were well acquainted with thoſe who ſaw our LORD after He was riſen, and knew them to be Perſons of Probity and Integrity, and yet would not believe their Report.

BUT

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BUT when the Apoſtles were ſent to preach the Goſpel, they were ſent to thoſe who were perfect Strangers, and knew nothing of them, and had therefore no Reaſon to believe them upon their bare Word.

TO remedy this Diſadvantage, the Apoſtles and firſt Preachers of the Goſpel had a Power of Working Miracles to confirm the Truth of what they ſaid. This was ſufficient to gain them Credit, and to induce thoſe to whom they preached, to conſider the Contents of their Meſſage, and to examine the Evidence which they produced in Favour of that Religion, which they were to eſtabliſh in the World; every Part whereof would, to ſincere and unprejudiced Enquirers, appear ſo worthy of GOD, and ſo well atteſted, that Men would ſoon be ſenſible of their Obligation to believe it, and become Converts to it.

IN this then the Virtue of Believing conſiſts, in Mens being ready to hearken to the Proofs which are brought for the Truth of Chriſtianity; in having their Ears always open to Inſtruction, and being willing to ſee that

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Light which is freely offered for their Direction.

THIS is a Debt which we owe to the Cauſe of Truth, and which, as rational Creatures we ſtand obliged to, to attend diligently to all thoſe Means of Knowledge and Inſtruction, which ſhall at any Time be put into our Power; eſpecially in Matters of ſuch Importance, as the Favour of GOD, and Eternal Salvation.

WHEN GOD makes a Revelation of His Will to Mankind, and gives ſufficient Proof of the Truth of this Revelation (without which it would be to no Purpoſe,) 'tis every one's Duty to whom this Revelation is made, to examine the Truth of it, in order to be fully convinced and ſatisfied of it. And he that thus believes the Goſpel upon rational and moral Grounds, and is convinced of the Truth of it upon his own Enquiries into the Proofs and Evidences upon which it ſtands, deſerves the Praiſe and the Reward of acting according to Reaſon, which is the Perfection of Man: Provided in the

NEXT Place, this Belief has a ſuitable Influence and Effect upon his Conduct.

For

For the Scripture Notion of Faith, eſpe- SERM. cially where there is any Virtue aſcri- V. bed to it, or any Reward promiſed to it, always includes Obedience, and has an immediate Connexion with Practice. The Word itſelf which ſignifies to believe, does alſo ſignify to obey, and is often promiſcuouſly uſed for either.

THUS, *Rom.* i. 5. *By whom we have received Grace and Apoſtleſhip, for Obedience to the Faith among all Nations for his Name.* Where the Belief of the Goſpel is called the Obedience of Faith.

IN *Chap.* x. 16. the Apoſtle argues thus, *But they have not all obeyed the Goſpel: For* Eſaias *ſaith, Lord, who hath believed our Report?* But if Faith does not include Obedience, how could he prove that there were ſome that did not obey the Goſpel, becauſe *Iſaiah* ſaid *There were ſome that did not believe it?*

THIS will farther appear by comparing 1 *Tim.* iv. 10. where GOD is ſaid to be the *Saviour of them that believe*; with *Heb.* v. 9. where He is ſaid to be the *Author of Eternal Salvation unto all them that obey him.*

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AND *Gal.* v. 6. where 'tis ſaid, That *in Chriſt Jeſus, neither Circumciſion availeth any Thing, nor Uncircumciſion; but Faith which worketh by Love*: With 1 *Cor.* vii. 19, *Circumciſion is nothing, and Uncircumciſion is nothing; But the keeping of the Commandments of God.* That is what GOD has Regard to.

IN like manner Unbelief and Diſobedience are frequently uſed as equivalent Terms. Thus, *Heb.* iii. 12. the Apoſtle, from the Example of the *Iſraelites*, cautions Chriſtians againſt Unbelief. *Take heed, Brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief in departing from the living God.* And repeating the ſame Caution, *Chap.* iv. 11, he varies the Phraſe a little, *Leſt any Man fall after the ſame Example of Diſobedience.* The Word is Ἀπειθείας, which indeed our Tranſlators render Unbelief: But This confirms what I bring it for, that Diſobedience and Unbelief are the ſame.

SO likewiſe we often find Faith and Diſobedience oppoſed in Scripture. *John* iii. 36. *He that believeth on the Son, hath Everlaſting Life: And he that believeth not the Son, ſhall not ſee Life.*

In

In the *Greek* it is, *He that obeyeth* SERM. V. *not the Son*, as you will ſee it rendered in the Margin.

AGAIN, 1 *Pet.* ii. 7. *Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious: But unto them which be diſobedient, the Stone which the Builders diſallowed, the ſame is made the Head of the Corner.*

AND the Reaſon of this is very plain: becauſe though it be a Commendation of our Faith that it is rational, and, next to the Grace of GOD, the Effect of our own conſidering and examining the Things we believe; yet unleſs this Faith worketh by Love, and produces univerſal and ſincere Obedience, it is of no Value, nor will be accepted of GOD.

FOR the Goſpel of our SAVIOUR was not deſigned to furniſh us with Matter for curious Speculations, to fill our Heads with empty Notions, and airy Schemes; but to ſink into our Hearts, and influence our Practice, to bring us to a Conformity to the Divine Nature, and work ourſelves up to the Temper and Diſpoſition of Heaven. This is what all the Truths of the Go-

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ſpel were originally revealed for, and what they have a natural Tendency to promote. And therefore though we believe the Goſpel never ſo firmly, and could bring a ſtrict Demonſtration for every Article of our Faith: Yet unleſs this Belief produces Obedience to the Precepts of the Goſpel, prevail with us to forſake our Sins, and to betake ourſelves to virtuous Courſes; we had as good believe nothing at all, and it had been better for us never to have known the Goſpel.

IN other Matters, our Knowledge and Belief often ends in bare Speculation and barren Theory: But in Religion our Knowledge and Belief ought always to be carried out to Practice; For this is the End they were deſigned for, and they are no farther to be accounted of than they attain this End. This is the proper Standard and Meaſure of their real Worth and Value, which can never riſe higher than this.

SO that the plain Meaning of the firſt Clauſe of the Text, *He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved*, is This. He that effectually aſſents to the Doctrine of CHRIST, and is ſo perſuaded

perſuaded of the Truth of it, as to live according to it; and makes open Profeſſion of this Belief, by being publickly admitted into this Religion by Baptiſm; *ſhall be ſaved*, i. e. ſhall partake of all the Privileges and Advantages of Chriſtianity, ſhall have all his paſt Sins and Tranſgreſſions forgiven him as a Reward of his believing and embracing this Religion, ſhall receive the Aſſiſtance of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT to enable him to forſake them and live better for the future, and in the End ſhall be crowned with Eternal Life and Happineſs. SERM. V.

THIS, I ſay, was the Original Meaning and Intention of the Words, when they were firſt ſpoken; and this was then the happy Conſequence and Effect of Mens embracing the Goſpel.

IF it be asked, What that particular Faith or Belief was, which was then required of Men in order to their partaking of theſe Benefits: The Anſwer is very plain, That it was a ſincere Belief that *Jeſus was the Chriſt*, and all the neceſſary Antecedents and neceſſary Conſequents of it, toge-

SERM. V. together with an open Profeſſion of this Belief.

THIS one Doctrine is delivered frequently in the *New Teſtament*, as the Sum and Subſtance of Chriſtianity; and the Belief of it as an infallible Note of a good Chriſtian, and a Child of GOD.

THE explicit Belief and open Profeſſion of this one Article is, according to the Tenor of the *New Teſtament*, a ſufficient Qualification for Baptiſm: Upon which followed Remiſſion of paſt Sins, and all other Benefits of the Goſpel Covenant.

'TIS needleſs to produce particular Paſſages in Proof of this Point. They occur ſo frequently in the Goſpel Hiſtory, that we can neither miſs nor miſtake them. I ſhall only obſerve in anſwer to thoſe, who, out of a Deſire of encreaſing their Faith and multiplying Articles of Belief, have oppoſed this Notion, and thereby have greatly corrupted the Simplicity of the Goſpel; that This One Article, taking it, as I before ſaid, with all its neceſſary Antecedents and Conſequents, does virtually include every Thing which

GOD

GOD Himſelf, I do not ſay Men, has made neceſſary to Salvation. SERM. V.

HE that believes *Jeſus to be the Chriſt*, believes Him to be ſent from GOD to make a new Revelation of His Will: Conſequently He believes the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion: By being baptized into the Name of CHRIST, he takes Him for his Lord and Maſter, and obliges himſelf to obey Him, and to obſerve all thoſe Laws which He has given us for the Government of our Life and Actions. And is not this Belief, accompanied with this Obedience, ſufficient to Salvation?

THE Scripture every where repreſents it as ſufficient. St. *Paul* tells us, That CHRIST *is the End of the Law, for Righteouſneſs to every one that believeth.* Rom. x. 4.

THE End of the Law was to bring Men to CHRIST; that by believing in Him, every one that did ſo, *might be juſtified by Faith.* Agreeably to what the ſame Apoſtle ſays; *The Law was our Schoolmaſter to bring us to* CHRIST, *that we might be juſtified by Faith.* Gal. iii. 24.

AND

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AND then describing the Difference between the Righteousness which is by the Law, and that which is of Faith, or by the *Messiah*; the Apostle declares this latter to consist in an open Profession, joined to a sincere Believing, that JESUS is the *Messiah*. That *if thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the Lord* JESUS, *and shalt believe in thy Heart that* GOD *hath raised Him from the Dead, thou shalt be saved.* This was believing Him to be the *Messiah*; since his Resurrection from the Dead, was the main Proof of his being so. *For with the Heart Man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation.*

A SINCERE Belief of this one Article, upon the Truth of which the Truth of Christianity depended, is necessary to influence our Practice, and make us Righteous Persons. And an open Profession of this Belief, by publickly embracing this Religion, is indispensably necessary to Salvation.

'TIS not enough to be Christians to ourselves, inwardly and privately, in secret before GOD; but we must be so outwardly,

outwardly, and declare it publickly to the World by our Words and Actions. SERM. V.

IF we do not this; we are either aſhamed of our Chriſtian Profeſſion, or afraid of the Dangers it may bring upon us; Both which are ſeverely condemned by our SAVIOUR, as unworthy of that Relation which we bear to Him, and inconſiſtent with the Intereſts of his Religion. It was very much ſo in the Beginning of Chriſtianity; and will be more or leſs ſo, to the End of the World.

THUS we ſee what that Belief is, which the Goſpel requires to Salvation; and That is, in ſhort, Such a Belief of the Goſpel, as influences our Practice; for That is the End of all Belief. I come now in the

II. SECOND Place to conſider, *What* that *Unbelief* is, which will condemn us at the laſt Day.

And This, as in the former Caſe, muſt be ſomething more than bare ſimple Unbelief. There is no Crime in this; and conſequently no Puniſhment can attend it. Men cannot believe, nor be blamed for not believing, what they had never any

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any Opportunity of knowing. 'Tis impoſſible for them, who never heard of CHRIST, to believe in Him: Nor can ſuch ever be condemned for not believing, becauſe it was never in their Power: *For*, as the Apoſtle argues, *how ſhall they call on Him, in whom they have not believed; and how ſhall they believe in Him, of whom they have not heard?*

Rom. x. 14.

NOR is it any Crime not to believe, where we have no ſufficient Evidence. To believe in ſuch a Caſe, would be Credulity. But the Crime of Unbelief conſiſts in rejecting the Evidence which is offered us, or ſtopping our Ears and not hearkning to it: In ſuffering ourſelves to be blinded by Paſſion and Prejudice; ſo as not to ſee that, which could not otherwiſe eſcape us: In giving way to partial and corrupt Affections, to ſelfiſh and narrow Motives, which make us Enemies to the Truth, or hide it from us, and render us unable to perceive it: In refuſing to admit that for a ſufficient Proof, which in other Caſes we ſhould never ſcruple; and requiring unreaſonable Degrees of Evidence, more than is neceſſary or poſſible to be had.

SUCH

SUCH Unbelief as This, ariſing from theſe and ſuch like Cauſes, will certainly condemn us, becauſe it is really criminal and ſinful. 'Tis a Fault of our Wills, and argues a corrupt and wicked Heart. *This is the Condemnation*, ſays our SAVIOUR, *that Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds are evil.* John iii. 19. SERM. V.

THIS is ſtiled, *Heb.* iii. 12. *an evil Heart of Unbelief*, as having its Riſe from evil Diſpoſitions and Inclinations, which a Belief of the Truth would curb and reſtrain.

SO that Infidelity or Unbelief is criminal, and what will condemn us at the laſt Day, when it proceeds, not from a weak Head, but from a wicked Heart; not from Want of Light and Evidence, but from Want of Inclination to ſee it, and be directed by it: In a word, Not from any Defect in our Underſtanding, but in our Wills: Not from any Darkneſs or Obſcurity in the Things themſelves, but from their being contrary to our Temper and Diſpoſition, to our dark Luſts and blind Paſſions.

WHEN-

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WHENEVER this is the Caſe; and this will frequently be the Caſe, where we are enſlaved to any Luſt or Paſſion; infidelity is ſinful: Becauſe 'tis obſtinate and willful, what we chooſe and prefer, when Believing was in our Power.

THE Queſtion which our SAVIOUR asked the *Jews*, is applicable to any other corrupt Paſſion or Affection, which has got the Aſcendant over us:

John v. 44. *How can ye believe, which receive Honour one of another, and ſeek not the Honour that cometh from* GOD *only?*

THE great and ruling Men among the *Jews*, were carried away with falſe Notions of Honour. They looked upon it as a Diminution of their Character, and what would loſe or leſſen their Credit among the People, to forſake *Moſes* to follow CHRIST; To renounce the Religion of their Foreſathers, wherein they had been brought up, and were the Teachers and Inſtructors of others. The People, on the other Side, were kept from Believing on our SAVIOUR, out of Regard to their Rulers, and the Veneration they bore to their Example. *Have any of the Rulers believed on Him?* This was thought

thought a juſt Excuſe for their Unbelief. SERM. V.

THOUGH our SAVIOUR brought ſufficient Credentials, and both by His Doctrine and Miracles plainly proved Himſelf to be the *Meſſiah*, yet the Generality of the *Jewiſh* Nation believed not on Him. Corrupt Paſſions and partial Affections had ſo blinded their Eyes and hardened their Hearts, that they would not ſee with their Eyes, nor underſtand with their Hearts, nor become Converts to His Religion. And many who believed on Him, did not confeſs Him openly, leſt they ſhould be put out of the Synagogue (which was eſteemed the greateſt Shame and Reproach that could befall them;) for *they loved the Praiſe of Men, more than the Praiſe of God*, John xii. 37, *&c.*

THERE is no Occaſion to enlarge upon this Head. 'Tis evident from that little which has been now ſaid, compared with what has been ſpoken upon the firſt Head of Diſcourſe, That the Infidelity for which Men will be condemned at the laſt Day, muſt be their own Fault, and ariſe from within, from an Averſion to the Truth; from

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their hating Knowledge, and not chooſing Inſtruction when it was freely tendered to them; from their deſpiſing and ſetting at nought thoſe Means and Opportunities of Information which were put in their Power, and wilfully ſhutting their Eyes againſt the Light. In this Senſe, *He that beliveth not, ſhall be condemned.* Our SAVIOUR carries this Matter further, *John* iii. 18. and tells us, That *he that believeth not*, has the Sentence of Condemnation in himſelf, *is condemned already, becauſe he hath not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God.*

OUR SAVIOUR makes no Mention of Baptiſm in the latter Clauſe of the Text. He does not ſay, He that believeth not, and is not baptized, ſhall be damned; becauſe Unbelief neceſſarily excludes Baptiſm, ſince it would be abſurd for a Man to be baptized into a Religion which he does not believe; and Baptiſm itſelf is but a Rite or Ceremony of mere poſitive Inſtitution, and of no Effect when ſeparated from Faith and a good Life; which Baptiſm was deſigned to repreſent to us, according to St. *Peter*'s Deſcription

tion of it, 1 *Pet.* iii. 21. where he tells us, That *it is not the putting away of the Filth of the Fleſh, but the Anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God.* SERM. V.

HAVING thus endeavoured to ſatisfy the two Enquiries I raiſed from my Text, I come now in the

III. AND Laſt Place, to ſee what Uſe and Improvement may be made of what has been ſaid.

Firſt. THE foregoing Diſcourſe ſhould teach us to have more charitable Thoughts, and to hope better of thoſe who never heard of the Goſpel, than to pronounce their Condition deſperate, and even damnable, and to think their beſt and greateſt Virtues to be but ſpecious and guilded Sins.

THE Text concerns thoſe only to whom the Goſpel has been preached, who have either actually heard of the Grace of CHRIST, or might have heard of it, if they had been ſo minded: Who have either known the Way of Righteouſneſs, or have had the Means and Opportunities of this Knowledge.

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WE have nothing to do to judge thoſe that are without, the Heathen World, to whom the joyful Sound of the Goſpel never came, and to whoſe Ears thoſe glad Tidings of Peace were never brought. Theſe GOD will judge, as well as us, by the reſpective Laws which he has given.

THOUGH they have not a written Law as the *Jews* had, and as we Chriſtians have; yet they have an unwritten Law, the Law of Reaſon, which if they hearken to and obey, they ſhall be accepted. For as the Apoſtle tells us, *Rom.* ii. 6, *&c. God will render to every Man according to his Deeds: to them, who by patient Continuance in well doing, ſeek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality; eternal Life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteouſneſs; Indignation and Wrath: Tribulation and Anguiſh upon every Soul of Man that doth evil, of the* Jew *firſt, and alſo of the* Gentile. *But Glory, Honour, and Peace, to every Man that worketh good, to the* Jew *firſt, and alſo to the* Gentile. *For there is no Reſpect of Perſons with God.*

For

For as many as have ſinned without Law, ſhall alſo periſh without Law: And as many as have ſinned in the Law, ſhall be judged by the Law. (For when the Gentiles *which have not the Law, do by Nature the Things contained in the Law, theſe having not the Law, are a Law unto themſelves: Which ſhew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conſcience alſo bearing witneſs, and their Thoughts the mean while accuſing, or elſe excuſing one another.) In the Day when God ſhall judge the Secrets of Men by Jeſus Chriſt, according to my Goſpel.* SERM. V.

THIS is St. *Paul*'s Determination of the Caſe of the Heathen World, with Regard to the Favour of GOD, and their Final Acceptance: And he had the Spirit of GOD. But ſad would be their Caſe, if there was any Truth in that Doctrine which ſome have delivered concerning them, who had neither the Spirit of GOD, nor of Charity.

Secondly, FROM what has been ſaid, Chriſtians may learn to have Charity for one another amidſt their dif-

SERM. V. ferent Opinions in Religious Matters.

FOR if a General Belief of the Truth of the Goſpel, which includes an explicit Belief of this particular Article that *Jeſus is the Chriſt*, together with all the neceſſary Antecedents and Conſequences of this Article, joined to our beſt Endeavours of living according to this Belief: I ſay if this be ſufficient to Salvation, which I think cannot be denied; by what Authority is more required?

THOUGH all Men may underſtand and believe a plain and general Truth: Yet when this Truth is drawn out into numberleſs Particulars, and all theſe Particulars explained again after ſo many different Manners, it cannot be expected that all Men, or many ſhould agree in their Belief of them.

BELIEF or Unbelief are not always in our Power. They depend upon the apparent Evidence of Things; and, ſimply conſidered, neither deſerve Praiſe, nor Blame. And therefore tho' a Man be in an Error, it does not follow that he is in Fault: Nor will his

his Error juſtify our thinking hardly of him, or treating him ill. SERM. V.

IF he believes the Truth of the Goſpel Revelation, receives CHRIST for his Lord and Maſter, and endeavours to obey His Laws to the utmoſt of his Power: Though he ſhould be miſtaken in many ſpeculative Points, yet This Faith, as general as it is, with this true and ſincere Obedience, will avail to his Salvation.

THE Text ſays in general, *He that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved.* And This is the conſtant Language of our SAVIOUR, and His Apoſtles. They ſpeak of a ſincere Belief in general. Of Believing *Chriſt to be the Son of God.* Of Believing *Jeſus to be the Chriſt.* Of Believing on *Him whom God ſent.* Of Believing that *God raiſed him from the Dead*, &c. This is the Belief which the Goſpel requires; and to this Belief the Promiſes of the Goſpel are made, even Eternal Life and Salvation.

AND the Reaſon of this, is plain from the very End and Deſign of Faith, which is to oblige us to a ſuitable Practice. For he that believes the

SERM. V. Truth of these Propositions, cannot but believe the Gospel to be a Divine Revelation. Consequently he cannot but believe, that Obedience to the Precepts of CHRIST is the true and only Way unto eternal Happiness. And that this Belief may produce Obedience to those Precepts in him that knows them, cannot be denied, without denying (which is very absurd) that it is possible for a Man to desire and pursue that which he firmly believes best for himself, and infinitely better than not to do so.

So that the main End and Design of the Gospel is secured by this Belief; and therefore no more than this can be absolutely and universally necessary. For the Necessity of the Means, can never rise higher than the End. Whatever more particular and explicit Belief we have, we must have it to ourselves, and not censure and condemn those who have it not.

Thirdly, HENCE 'tis evident that we need not disquiet ourselves about the Efficient Cause of our Faith or Belief of the Gospel; as whether it proceeds from rational and prudential Motives,

or

or is produced in us by ſupernatural Means, by ſpecial Grace properly ſo called: Since whatever Way we come to a Belief of the Goſpel, if our Faith produces a ſuitable Practice 'tis juſtifying Faith, and will be ſo far pleaſing to GOD, as to procure Salvation. SERM. V.

FOR though we are commonly more affected with, aud more thankful for ſpecial Favours, ſuch as are proper to ourſelves only, or communicated but to a few, than for thoſe that are common to many, or to all; yet the Truth is, this Diſpoſition proceeds merely from Pride, which makes us deſire Pre-eminence above others, and to pleaſe ourſelves when we are preferred; and from Envy which makes us repine at the Happineſs of others, as if it were a leſſening of our own: And not from Chriſtian Charity, which enjoins us to deſire and procure, to the utmoſt of our Power, the Good, eſpecially the Spiritual and Eternal Good of all Men, and to rejoice at it, and give GOD hearty Thanks for it, as if it were a Multiplication of our own.

FROM whence it follows, That we owe unto GOD at leaſt as much Thanks and

SERM. V. and Honour, and Glory, for working Faith in us by natural as by ſupernatural Means; by common, as by ſpecial Grace; at leaſt, if we ſuppoſe that the latter as well as the former, ſpecial Grace as well as common, leaves unto Men a free Power to believe or not believe, *i. e.* if both be equally reſiſtible, without which they are of no account. I ſay, we are as much bound to give Thanks to GOD for the one kind of Faith as for the other; becauſe the one as well as the other, is capable of producing Obedience; and ſo will be accepted of GOD, and *imputed to* us *for Righteouſneſs.*

FOR the Scripture ſays, without any Diſtinction or Exception, and all Parties I think are are agreed upon it, That *he that believes, ſhall be ſaved:* that *Faith which worketh by Love,* and produceth univerſal and ſincere Obedience, is true Faith, and never fails of Acceptance.

AND the contrary Opinion, is the ready Way to caſt Chriſtians into grievous and endleſs Perplexities; ſince in Effect it amounts to this: That no Man, without ſpecial Revelation, can know whether he

he has justifying Faith or not. For though a Man knows he believes the GOSPEL, and believes it firmly and undoubtedly, and is resolved as soon to disbelieve Sense or Demonstration, as to entertain any voluntary Doubts of his Religion; and is prepared in Mind rather to forsake all that he has, than to renounce it: Yet this is no Security, because his Faith may not be of the right Kind; and 'twill be impossible for him to know that 'tis so, unless the same SPIRIT which immediately produces his Faith in him, does also immediately give him Assurance that it is of Divine Original; Which is too wild and extravagant a Pretence to be admitted. SERM. V.

AND therefore 'tis needless to disquiet ourselves about what Sort or Kind our Faith is of, whether it be worked in us by Natural or Supernatural Means. We are to take an Estimate of it by other Measures, by the Effect it has upon our Lives and Actions.

IF our Belief of the GOSPEL makes us forsake our Sins, and betake ourselves to virtuous Courses; if it weans our Affections from this World, and fixes them upon another; if it makes us Partakers

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takers of the Divine Nature, and raiſes us to a Divine and Heavenly Life; it has that Effect upon us which it was deſigned to have; and we ſhall be juſtified thereby. And therefore,

Fourthly and *Laſtly*, IF the only End of Faith be Practice; and Obedience ſhould always be the Effect of Belief: Let us always have this End in View; and of whatever Sort or Kind, and in whatever Meaſure or Degree our Faith is, let us be ſure not to fail of a right Practice.

THE more rational and well-grounded our Belief is, the more likely will it be to influence our Actions; if there be no corrupt Paſſions or partial Affections to hinder it. And therefore we ſhould do all we can to arrive at ſuch a Belief of Chriſtianity, by carefully conſidering the Proofs and Evidences upon which it ſtands.

WE have not indeed Mathematical, but we have Moral Certainty of the Truth of our Religion; which though a perverſe and obſtinate Wrangler may, yet no prudent and ſober Man can poſſibly refuſe to yield a firm Aſſent to; as firm an Aſſent, as he would yield to any

any Thing which he himſelf had not been an Eye or an Ear-witneſs of. SERM. V.

AND tho' it may be beyond the Capacity of every particular Chriſtian to arrive at ſuch a firm and explicit Belief, yet if he arrives at ſuch a general Belief of Chriſtianity, and ſuch an Aſſent to the Truth of it, as will perſuade him to conform his Life unto it; this will be abundantly ſufficient to ſecure his Salvation.

INDEED, more than this cannot be expected from the Generality of Mankind, whoſe Capacities and Opportunities will not admit of a more thorough and particular Examination. And therefore the Enquiry at the Laſt Day will not be, How minutely and particularly we have believed our *Creed*; but how exactly we have kept the Commandments: Not how diſtinct and explicit our Faith has been; but how virtuous and regular our Practice. This, I ſay, will then be the grand Enquiry: And the Sentence of Abſolution or Condemnation, follows doing or not doing the Will of GOD, keeping or tranſgreſſing his Commandments; without any mention then, of Believing or not believing. Becauſe it will then ſignify nothing what

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what we have believed, if our Practice has not been anſwerable; and it will be in vain to plead an *Orthodox* Faith, in Excuſe of a wicked Life. Tho' we could demonſtrate every Article of our *Creed*, and *had all Faith, ſo that we could remove Mountains*; though we had Propheſied, and wrought Miracles in our SAVIOUR's Name, and had been Partakers of all the External Privileges of being his Diſciples, and that in the higheſt Degree; yet will all this avail us nothing, without ſincere and univerſal Obedience; but our SAVIOUR will utterly diſown and reject us in that Day, and will tell us that He knows not who, nor whence we are; that we certainly do not belong to Him; and will bid us depart from Him, becauſe we have been Workers of Iniquity.

ACTS x. 34, 35.

Then Peter *opened his Mouth, and ſaid, Of a Truth I perceive that* GOD *is no Reſpecter of Perſons:*

But in every Nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh Righteouſneſs, is accepted with Him.

THESE are the Words with which St. *Peter* began his Diſcourſe to *Cornelius*; whom he was commanded by a Viſion from Heaven to go and Preach to, and inſtruct in the Chriſtian Religion. The Hiſtory of which, you have at large in this Chapter. SERM. VI.

As

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AS soon as St. *Peter* was come where *Cornelius* and his Friends were assembled, the *Text* tells us that *he opened his Mouth:* Which is an *Hebrew* Phrase, and is used when any one begins to speak with Seriousness and Premeditation, and has something of Moment to deliver.

THUS 'tis said of our Blessed SAVIOUR, when He Preached that Divine Sermon upon the Mount, That *He opened his Mouth, and taught his Disciples.* And what St. *Peter* here begins his Discourse with, is of the utmost Consequence, and is introduced with the greatest Seriousness.

Matth. v. 2.

HE had before been carried away with the common Error of the *Jews*; who, because they were GOD's ancient People, and had been long taken into Covenant with Him, looked upon themselves as His only Favourites, and other Nations as utterly rejected and forsaken by Him; and accordingly held it unlawful to have any Correspondence with them.

YE *know*, says St. *Peter*, to the Messengers which *Cornelius* sent to him, *how that it is an unlawful Thing for a Man*

Acts x. 28.

Man that is a Jew, *to keep Company or come unto one of another Nation: But* GOD *hath shewed me, that I should not call any Man common or unclean.* SERM. VI.

GOD had shewed him his Mistake by the Vision which he saw from Heaven; and he was farther convinced of his Error by what *Cornelius* told him in like manner befell Him.

AND therefore he begins his Discourse with rectifying the false Notion which he and his Brethren had hitherto entertained of GOD, as if he was like the Heathen Idols, confined to the Jewish Temple and Nation, and could not extend His Blessing any farther, and had no Regard to other People.

OF *a Truth*, (says he) *I perceive that* GOD *is no Respecter of Persons: But in every Nation he that feareth* GOD, *and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with Him.*

THE Words then present us with just Notions and worthy Conceptions of GOD; which next to the very Being of GOD, are the Foundation of all true Religion; and do as plainly, as Words can do any Thing, declare to us upon what Terms all Mankind, of what

SERM. VI. Condition or Nation ſoever, may find Acceptance with GOD.

THE mere Belief of the Being of a GOD, will contribute but little to a true State of Religion, without due Apprehenſions of the Divine Excellencies and Perfections. A Man may have ſuch unworthy Notions of a Deity, that it would in ſome Reſpects be as good, nay much better, to be without a Notion of GOD, than ſuch a one as he may poſſibly frame.

TO have no Opinion at all of GOD, is barely Unbelief: But to have an unworthy Opinion of GOD, ſeems to be ſomething worſe: 'Tis Contumely and Reproach.

NOW there are ſome Opinions which do thus reproach the DEITY, "And "(as a Great Man expreſſes it *) ren- "der Him under ſuch a Notion, that "if the Giants had prevailed in their "Attempt againſt Heaven, that Place "had not been worſe ſupplied."

SUCH as repreſent GOD as being rigorous and auſtere, eaſily provoked by every

* *Wilkin's* Nat. Rel. p. 101.

every little Oversight and Mistake, and as easily appeased again by any slight Formality: As made up of arbitrary Will, and uncontroulable Power: As cruel and inexorable, delighting in the Misery and Ruin of His Creatures, and destining Men to Destruction without any Regard to their Carriage and Behaviour: As acting by Humour and Fancy, more than Reason; and laying the greatest Stress upon outward insignificant Circumstances, and neglecting Things of inward and substantial Worth. SERM. VI.

THESE and such like Notions of GOD, have occasioned the greatest Errors and Absurdities in Religion both as to Practice and Belief; and been, in a great Measure the Cause of all the Idolatry and Superstition which ever was in the World.

FOR such as Mens Notions are of GOD, such will their Religion and Worship of Him be: And without true Notions of GOD, Religion will never promote His Glory or our own Happiness. If we conceive of GOD otherwise than He is, we bereave Him of that Honour which is due to Him,

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by alienating our Minds from Him, and betraying ourselves into Fear and Superstition, Atheism and Idolatry. And thus that Religion which was designed to glorify GOD, and benefit ourselves, tends to dishonour GOD, and to make ourselves miserable.

'TIS owing to the false Notions which Men have of GOD, that the Religion of some Men is so slight, empty and trifling; of others, so melancholy and uncomfortable. The prophane Looseness of some, and the superstitious Strictness and Severity of others: Confidence and Presumption, Melancholy and Despair, with many other Evils, are owing to the same Cause.

BUT the Text presents us with such a just and worthy Notion of GOD, as would prevent all these Mischiefs, and most effectually promote true Piety and Holiness amongst us.

OF *a Truth, I perceive, that God is no Respecter of Persons: But in every Nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with Him.*

I SHALL

I SHALL therefore make it my present Business, SERM. VI.

I. To illustrate and confirm this Description which St. *Peter* gives us of GOD. And then,

II. I SHALL show, in severally Particulars, what Use we may, and ought to make of it.

I. LET us consider the Description which St. *Peter* here gives us of GOD. And This consists of Two Parts.

1. GOD is here described negatively, as *no Respecter of Persons.*

2. POSITIVELY, as a general Lover of Good Men, without Regard to any outward Circumstances whatever. *In every Nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with Him.*

1. GOD is described negatively, as *no Respecter of Persons.* By which we are not to understand, that GOD never prefers one Person before another, but that He never does this upon Account of their outward Circumstances and Condition, which are here meant by

SERM. VI. the word *Person*, as is evident from the History in this Chapter.

HE did indeed, for wise Reasons, choose the Children of *Israel* out of all the Nations of the Earth, adopted them for his peculiar People, and made a Covenant with them. But he did not choose them for their Numbers, for they were the least of all People; nor upon Account of any other outward Circumstances, in which they were in no wise better than others. But as He designed to preserve the Belief of His Being and Providence, and in Time to restore His true Religion in the World: So it was necessary to fix His Name among some People, to guard them from the Idolatry of other Nations, and in them to lay the Foundations of that Religion which He designed afterwards to establish as the general Religion of the whole World.

AND for Reasons best known to His Infinite Wisdom, He did choose the People of the *Jews* for this Purpose. But even then He was far from rejecting those of any other Nation who were truly good and religious; but such were always acceptable to Him.

FOR He is *no Reſpecter of Perſons*, nor regards any of thoſe Conſiderations which too often move and byaſs us to prefer one Man before another. All Men are equally his Creatures, and he looks upon them all as ſuch. He is the GOD of the Spirits of all Fleſh, the common Father of us all, and has an equal Regard to all who behave themſelves dutifully towards Him. He is free from that Littleneſs and Narrowneſs of Mind, thoſe Party and partial Conſiderations, thoſe By-intereſts and Self-Deſigns, thoſe unreaſonable Paſſions and corrupt Affections, which govern the Generality of Mankind. SERM. VI.

HE does not reſtrain and confine his Favours to any Sect or Nation under Heaven, nor tye Himſelf down to thoſe ſcanty Meaſures which we deal out to one another. He does not rule Himſelf by thoſe Marks of Diſtinction, and Proverbs of Reproach, which Men have invented, and Cuſtom has ſince eſtabliſhed; nor look upon us with thoſe Views, and in thoſe Lights, wherein we have ſet each other. *Can any good Thing come out of* Nazareth? was a ſpiteful Proverb then in Uſe, like

SERM. VI. many others concerning other Places, but sufficiently confuted by our Blessed SAVIOUR's Conception and Parentage; to let us see that our Conceits are no Rule to GOD, and that He does not govern the World by our foolish Proverbs. He is not carried away by any of those groundless Prejudices, with which we are blinded. He considers Men as they are in themselves, and not according to any outward Relation they stand in: And as there are good Men of all Countries and Nations, so, wherever there are any such, they are sure to find Acceptance with Him.

ALL those external Qualifications which are so apt to dazzle our Eyes, that we seldom look any further, but judge of Men by these Things, and esteem or despise them accordingly; are of no manner of Account with Him, who *seeth not as Man seeth, nor judgeth as Man judgeth, but is a Discerner of the inward Parts and judgeth righteous Judgment.*

HE never looks upon Mens outward State and Condition, or is influenced by the external Appearances of Things.

No Man is acceptable to Him becauſe he is a *Jew* or *Greek*, rich or poor, noble or ignoble, bond or free. He has no Regard to Mens Birth and Extract, their Stations or Relations, or any ſuch outward and accidental Diſtinctions. Theſe Things, though highly eſteemed among Men, are of no Eſteem with GOD; and are indeed Abomination in his Sight, when Men build ſo much upon them as to think thereby to recommend themſelves to His Favour. SERM. VI.

THESE Things add nothing to the Merits of any Perſon or Cauſe, nor make any Alteration in them. And as GOD Himſelf has no Reſpect to theſe Things; ſo He has ſtrictly forbid it in thoſe who are to adminiſter publick Juſtice, and to ſee that every Man have Right. Thus *Lev.* xix. 15. *Ye ſhall do no Unrighteouſneſs in Judgment: Thou ſhalt not reſpect the Perſon of the Poor, nor honour the Perſon of the Mighty; but in Righteouſneſs ſhalt thou judge thy Neighbour.* And again, *Deut.* i. 17. *Ye ſhall not reſpect Perſons in Judgment; but ye ſhall hear the Small as well as the Great; you ſhall not be afraid of the*

Face

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Face of Man, &c. And what GOD so strictly forbids in others, we may be sure He has no Propensions to in Himself.

THUS we find Him described to the Children of *Israel*, as a *Great* GOD, *Mighty and Terrible, which regardeth not Persons, nor taketh Rewards.* Thus *Jehoshaphat* addresses himself to the People: *Wherefore now let the Fear of the* LORD *be upon you, take heed and do it; for there is no Iniquity with the* LORD *our* GOD, *nor respect of Persons, nor taking of Gifts.* In like manner *Elihu* tells *Job*, That GOD *accepteth not the Persons of Princes, nor regardeth the Rich more than the Poor: For they all are the Work of his Hands.*

Deut. x. 17.

Job xxxiv 19.

AND if GOD is represented thus under the *Old Testament*, when He made a visible Distinction in Favour of the *Jewish* People; much more may we expect to find the same Representation made of Him in the *New*, where all such Distinctions cease, and *the middle Wall of Partition is taken down.* St. *Paul* tells us, That GOD *will render to every Man according to his Deeds*; and that *there is no Respect of Persons with*

Rom. ii. 6, 11.

GOD.

GOD. The ſame Thing is often repeated in his Epiſtle to the *Galatians*; where we are farther told, That *Circumciſion availeth nothing, nor Uncircumciſion; but Faith which worketh by Love.* SERM. VI.

THE Apoſtle uſes the ſame Argument to perſuade the *Epheſians* to deal kindly by their Servants: *Knowing that your Maſter alſo is in Heaven; neither is there Reſpect of Perſons with Him,* Epheſ. vi. 9.

THE ſame Truth is more fully ſet forth, *Coloſ.* iii. 11. where we are told, that under the GOSPEL, *there is neither* Greek *nor* Jew, *Circumciſion nor Uncircumciſion*, Barbarian, Scythian, *Bond, nor Free*; *but* CHRIST *is all in all.* And Verſe 25. *He that doeth Wrong, ſhall recive for the Wrong which he hath done; and there is no Reſpect of Perſons.* And, to name no more, St. *Peter* exhorts us, to *call on the* FATHER, *who without Reſpect of Perſons judgeth according to every Man's Work*; and to *paſs the Time of our ſojourning here in Fear.* 1 Pet. i. 17.

THUS is GOD every where repreſented in Scripture under the ſame Character

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racter which St. *Peter* here gives of Him, as no Reſpecter of Perſons, and having no Regard to thoſe external Diſtinctions and accidental Differences which there are between Men, in conferring his Favours upon them.

THE Light of Nature too, teaches us to think thus of GOD. As He is Infinitely Happy, He is above the Reach of Temptation, and has nothing to Hope or Fear; which are the uſual Motives to Us to Reſpect Perſons, and overlook the Merits of the Cauſe.

HIS Infinite Wiſdom ſecures Him from Error, and the Rectitude of his Will from any partial and corrupt Affection. As He always knows on which ſide Truth and Juſtice lie, ſo He always determines on that Side; and no conceivable Reaſon can be aſſigned, why He ſhould ever vary from the eternal Rule of Right, and the immutable Reaſon of Things.

HE is Abſolute and Independent, needeth no Man's Service, and feareth no Man's Perſon; and cannot therefore be byaſſed by any Conſideration, by any Favour and Affection, other than what

what the Perſon or the Cauſe may juſtly deſerve. SERM. VI.

THUS are we to conceive of GOD negatively, as perfectly free not only from the Faults, but the Infirmities and Imperfections of his Creatures; as *no Reſpecter of Perſons*, and having no Regard to any Thing but Mens inward Merit and Deſert.

FOR the more Confirmation of which, St. *Peter* proceeds from this negative to a *poſitive* Deſcription of GOD; He tells us,

2. THAT *in every Nation he that feareth Him, and worketh Righteouſneſs, is accepted with Him.*

THESE two Phraſes of fearing GOD, and working Righteouſneſs, comprize all the Commands of both Tables; our whole Duty both to GOD, and Man.

FEARING GOD, plainly implies all that Worſhip and Homage which is directly and immediately owing to the Supream BEING. Which, as 'tis the Foundation of all Religion, as well as a principal Part of it; ſo it is often put in Scripture for the Whole of our Duty.

SERM. VI. BY working Righteousness, we are to understand all those Duties which are owing from one Man to another, such as Justice and Honesty, Mercy and Compassion, Truth and Fidelity, and the like. And as there is Righteousness due to ourselves, and Men may wrong and abuse the Dignity of their own Natures, and do Violence to themselves; so it may include those Duties which are owing to ourselves, such as Modesty and Humility, Sobriety and Temperance, *&c.*

SO that these two Phrases together, describe a truly Good and Virtuous Man, such as *Cornelius* was, to whose Case this is to be applied. For he is described in the Beginning of this Chapter, Ver. 2. as *a Devout Man, and one that feared* GOD *with all his House; which gave much Alms to the People, and prayed to* GOD *alway.*

FROM the Vision which was vouchsafed to *Cornelius*, and whereby he was directed to send for St. *Peter* to instruct him more fully in his Duty; and from the Vision which St. *Peter* saw, and whereby he was directed to go to *Cornelius*; St. *Peter* was convinced of his Mistake

Miſtake in looking upon the *Gentiles* as unclean and polluted, rejected by GOD, and to be ſhunned by his People. On the contrary, he now perceived of a Truth, that GOD was not that Reſpecter of Perſons which he imagined; but that *in every Nation he which feareth Him, and worketh Righteouſneſs, is accepted with Him.* SERM. VI.

THAT a *Gentile*, nay, even a *Roman*, whom the *Jews* looked upon as the worſt of People, becauſe they had been hardly uſed by them; was acceptable to GOD, if he was one that feared Him, and worked Righteouſneſs.

THESE are the Things which always have, and always will recommend us to GOD; and without theſe all other Qualifications whatever ſignify nothing, and will avail us nothing, when it comes to the Tryal. 'Tis not our being of any Nation or any Sect, Members of any particular Church or Society, that will entitle us to GOD's Favour; but our working the Work of GOD, living up to that Light and Knowledge which He has afforded us, and being moſt punctual and exact in the Diſcharge of thoſe Moral Duties,

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ties, which all Mankind, who have had any true Notions of GOD and Religion, have ever thought themselves obliged to.

THEY who enjoy the Benefit of a Revelation, are bound to believe and do whatever That Revelation contains. But no Revelation can set aside the great Duties of Natural Religion. On the contrary, 'Tis the Design of all Revealed Religion, to clear up and improve the Duties of Natural Religion, and bind them faster upon us. So that to Fear GOD and work Righteousness, is at this Time as necessary as ever, to render Men acceptable with Him.

AND where Men have not a more particular Revelation of GOD's Will, This is what must recommend them to Him. Whoever Men be, and whatever Nation they are of, if they Fear GOD, and work Righteousness, to the utmost of their Power; they will most certainly meet with Acceptance from Him. This is all that He regards in them, and all that he regards them for: Not for any outward Respect or Relation, because they are of this or that Nation; but for their inward Piety and Virtue.

THUS

THUS *Abel* offered unto GOD a more excellent Sacrifice than *Cain*, and obtained Witness that he was *Righteous*. Thus *Enoch* was translated, because he had this Testimony, that he pleased GOD. It was by fearing GOD, that *Noah* saved himself and his House, and became Heir of the Righteousness which is by Faith. *Abraham*, the Father of the Faithful, and *Moses* the Man of GOD, were both of them accepted upon the same Terms. The Scripture gives us the same Character of *Job*, That *he was a perfect and upright Man, one that feared God, and eschewed Evil.* SERM. VI.

THUS we see the Matter stood, before there was any written revealed Will of GOD. *In every Nation*, and of every People, *he that feareth Him, and worketh Righteousness is accepted with Him.*

EVEN after the Promulgation of the Law of *Moses*, the same Stress was still laid upon these Duties; and the Prophets which GOD sent from Time to Time to His People, were continually Teaching them this Lesson.

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HE *hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Micah vi. 8.

THE Psalmist teaches the same Doctrine; and St. *Peter* seems in the Text to allude to his Words, *Psal.* xv. 1, 2. *Lord, who shall dwell in thy Tabernacle? Who shall abide in thy Holy Hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh Righteousness, and speaketh the Truth in his Heart.* And again, *Psal.* xxxiii. 18. *Behold, the Eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him.*

IF we proceed to consider the Gospel of our Blessed SAVIOUR, that last and most perfect Revelation of GOD's Will to Mankind: We shall find the main Design of it to be, to instruct Men more fully in the Knowledge and Fear of the true GOD, and to press them to the Practice of universal Righteousness: *For the Grace of God that bringeth Salvation hath appeared unto all Men, teaching us, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World.*

Tit. ii. 11, 12.

So

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So that still the main Stress is laid upon those Things wherein true Piety and Virtue consist. And, it being the main Design of those Revelations which GOD has made of His Will to Mankind, to impress the Fear and Dread of Him upon His Creatures, and to bring them to the Practice of that Eternal Rule of Righteousness by which He always acts; we cannot doubt of His Value for them.

WHEREVER therefore He finds Men thus disposed to reverence Him, and to behave themselves well towards their Fellow Creatutes: Wherever Men fear GOD and love one another; they will be accepted without any Regard to their Country or Nation, their Tribe or Family; for This is what GOD would bring all People to, *from the rising up of the Sun unto the going down thereof.* This is that inward Temper of Mind, and that outward Practice of Life, which He requires; and which, wherever He meets it, will find Acceptance with Him.

THEY who have no other Knowledge of GOD and their Duty, but what the Light of Nature teaches

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them; no Law for the Government of their Actions, but the Law of Reaſon and Conſcience; will be accepted, if they live up to that Light which they have, and govern their Actions according to the Law of Reaſon and Conſcience.

IF the *Gentiles* who *knew God, and yet glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their Imaginations, and changed the Glory of the incorruptible God into an Image made like to corruptible Things*; did juſtly provoke GOD's Anger againſt them to give *them up unto vile Affections*, (as St. *Paul* tells us, *Rom.* i.) Then they who give GOD the Honour due unto his Name, who worſhip Him according to the beſt Knowledge they have of Him, will find Acceptance with Him.

THIS was the Caſe of *Cornelius*; who worſhipped GOD, and did Good to Men; *he prayed to God always, and gave much Alms to the People*: And This he did by the mere Light of Nature, not having embraced either the Jewiſh or the Chriſtian Religion.

FOR

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FOR this he was accepted with GOD and highly favoured, and had farther Revelations of His Will. So that though it may be diſputed how far ſuch Righteouſneſs as this, and ſuch Good Works as theſe, are of themſelves available to Salvation; yet it cannot be denied but that they put Men in GOD's Way, reconcile Him to them; and, whatever elſe is wanting, diſpoſe Him to reveal even That unto them. This is evident from the Inſtance of *Cornelius*; and This will be the happy Condition of all who are like minded with him, who are well inclined, and diſpoſed to Piety and Good Works.

WHEREVER GOD meets with any ſuch, of whatever Nation or People; they will be ſure to meet with His Favour. All Men are equally His Creatures, and bear the ſame Relation to Him. And as 'tis not any Thing without us, but ſomething within us, that muſt recommend us to Him: So He does not judge of Men according to their outward Condition and external Appearance, but according to the Truth which he finds in their inward Parts.

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NO Nation or People whatever, ſhall engroſs His Favours, or have Him for their GOD in ſo peculiar a Manner that He ſhould have no Regard to others; for He is no Reſpecter of Perſons, but *His tender Mercies are over all His Works; and in every Nation He that feareth Him, and worketh Righteouſneſs, is accepted with Him.*

THIS is the Deſcription which St. *Peter* gives us of GOD; ſuch a Deſcription as is truly worthy of GOD, and repreſents Him to His Creatures with the utmoſt Advantage.

LET us therefore in the next Place,

II. SEE what *Uſe* may be made of this Deſcription.

1. THIS ſhould teach us to take Care how we give Way to this Practice of having Reſpect to Perſons, which GOD ſo often diſclaims in Himſelf, and ſo ſtrictly forbids in others.

WE cannot indeed know Mens Hearts, and muſt therefore make a Judgment of them from their outward Carriage and Behaviour.

BUT

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BUT where this is such as it ought to be; where Mens Actions are unblameable in the Main, and agreeable to that Rule by which they ought to walk; There they ought to stand fair with us, and be in Favour; and we should never prefer others before them, for the Sake of any Advantages in their outward State and Condition.

THERE is a Respect due to Men upon Account of their Places and Stations, which the good Order and Government of the World require us to pay them. But, setting aside the Case of Civil Distinctions, no outward Circumstances should give one Man the Preference to another; nor any thing recommend them to us, but what will recommend them to GOD.

AS we are Christians, we are not to regard the External Conditions of others, nor esteem them upon that Account. This is what St. *James* means, when he bids us not to *have the Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, with Respect of Persons*, Ch. ii. 1. GOD *hath chosen the Poor of this World, rich in Faith, and Heirs of*

SERM. VI. *the Kingdom which he hath promised to them that love Him.*

IN chooſing Men for Members of His Church, and calling them to the Grace of the Goſpel; he has no Regard to any Thing but their inward Qualifications. They that are the beſt Men, are moſt in His Favour, and ſhould for that Reaſon be moſt in ours.

2. THIS ſhould caution us againſt taking up groundleſs Prejudices againſt any, and being prepoſſeſſed with ill Notions of them from ſuch Reaſons as are far from concluding any Thing ill againſt them. Such as Mens particular Countries and Nations, their Employments and Profeſſions, their Kindred and Relations, and the like.

THERE is ſcarce any Thing of this Kind, upon which Malice and ill Nature have not fixed ſome By-word and Proverb of Reproach. But it is extremely weak, as well as wicked, to be carried away by any ſuch ſpiteful Sayings; and to condemn whole Nations, and whole Profeſſions of Men by the Groſs, for the Sake of ſome unworthy Members.

THERE

THERE have been Great and Good Men of all Nations; and, I may add, of all Perſuaſions. But whether this be ſo or not, we are never to judge of Men by theſe Rules. This is plainly to have Reſpect of Perſons, and to eſteem or deſpiſe Men for ſuch Things as are of no Account with GOD. *In every Nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh Righteouſneſs, is accepted with Him.* SERM. VI.

HE is not governed Himſelf, nor (as I before ſaid) does He govern the World, by our fooliſh Sayings and Proverbs. It behoves us therefore to take Care how we indulge this vain and idle Humour; leſt we condemn thoſe as good for nothing, who are in high Eſteem with GOD; and approve moſt, of thoſe whom He abhors.

3. THIS ſhould learn us to enlarge our Notions of GOD's Goodneſs, and not to make ourſelves the Rule and Meaſure of His Perfections. This indeed is moſt natural to ſelfiſh and narrow Men, to think that GOD is altogether ſuch an one as themſelves, and to conceive of Him according to their own Tempers and Inclinations.

THOSE

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THOSE that are of ill Natures, and little Minds; who lay a greater Stress upon small and low Matters, outward Forms and Ceremonies, than upon real Worth and substantial Virtue; who are apt to be easily incensed and provoked, and as easily appeased and satisfied; who confine all their Favour and Affection to a Party, and cannot think well of any who think differently from themselves: Such Men, I say, are apt to conceive all this of GOD, and to imagine that He will deal with Men just as they do themselves; and not only so, but they are governed too by these Maxims in their own Behaviour towards GOD. They think to recommend themselves to Him, by the same Things wherewith they are pleased with others: By a strict Observance of outward Forms and Ceremonies; by contending earnestly for small Matters, and expressing more Zeal for them than for the weightier Things of the Law, Judgment, Mercy and Truth.

BUT the *Text* gives us quite other Notions of this Matter; that GOD is not to be pleased by any thing but substantial Holiness, and sincere Religion; nor

nor to be diſpleaſed but by voluntary Sin and Wickedneſs: That all other Things whatever, weigh nothing in the Balance of the Sanctuary, and deſerve not the leaſt Notice or Regard from the Great GOVERNOR of the World. His Goodneſs is under no Reſtraint of Perſons, Time, or Place; but extends itſelf equally at all Times to all Men who truly Fear Him, and work Righteouſneſs. *To that Man will I look*, ſaith GOD, *even to him that is Poor, and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my Word*, Iſa. lxvi. 2. SERM. VI.

4. THAT GOD *is no Reſpecter of Perſons; but* that *in every Nation he that feareth Him, and worketh Righteouſneſs, is accepted with Him*; is Matter of great Encouragement to all who are ſincerely Good, and whoſe chief Care and Study it is to recommend themſelves to GOD.

FOR from hence it appears, that the Things which will recommend us to GOD, are in our own Power, and depend upon our own Induſtry and Endeavours. 'Tis not our being of any particular Nation or Country, or that 'tis our Lot to be Members of any Church

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Church or Society, that are the only Things which can entitle us to the Divine Favour.

THESE Things are indeed many times great Bleſſings to us, and for which we ought to be duly thankful, that we are born in a Chriſtian Country, and of Chriſtian Parents; that from our Youth we have known the Scriptures, and have been bred up in the Principles and Practice of the true Religion; and that we are Members of a Church, where this Religion is profeſſed and taught in great Purity. Theſe are Advantages for which we cannot be ſufficiently thankful: And which we ſhould ſtudy to improve, by improving ourſelves in all Holineſs and Virtue. Without this, all theſe Advantages, great as they are, will ſtand us in no ſtead, but turn to our greater Condemnation.

AS to thoſe whom Providence has not thus highly favoured, who enjoy not theſe Privileges, or not in that Degree; the *Text* gives Encouragement even to thoſe, that if they fear GOD, and work Righteouſneſs, according to the beſt of their Knowledge and Power; they ſhall find Acceptance with Him.

AND

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AND in general, all Men whatever, are hereby invited to *taſte, and ſee, how Gracious the* LORD *is*; and are aſſured, that if they perform their Duty to the beſt of their Knowledge and Power, they ſhall in no wiſe be caſt out. For the Goodneſs of GOD is not like Man's, confined to any Place or People, or ty'd up by any foregoing fatal Decrees and unconditional Reſolutions; but is extenſive and boundleſs, and reaches to all who behave themſelves in a worthy manner.

5. AND *Laſtly*, Hence we may learn the great Excellency of what we call Moral Virtue, *i. e.* of thoſe Duties which the Light of Nature teaches us, and which Men unaſſiſted by Revelation have always thought themſelves obliged to. For the exact Performance of theſe, is not only in itſelf acceptable and pleaſing to GOD, but is a Means of procuring farther Degrees of Light and Knowledge; According to that known Saying of our Bleſſed SAVIOUR's, *To him that hath*, i. e. makes Uſe of what he already has, *more ſhall be given*; *but from him that hath not*, *i. e.* hath made no Uſe of what he has,

SERM. VI. has, *shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.*

CORNELIUS was a *Gentile*, and had no other Knowledge of Religion, but what the Light of Nature taught him; that all Glory was due to GOD, and Good-will to Men. His Practice was answerable to this Knowledge; Which not only gained him Favour with GOD, but procured him a particular and miraculous Revelation of the GOSPEL; and to him it was given to know the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.

LET no Man therefore, despise, or undervalue Moral Righteousness; for this is in great Esteem with GOD, and 'tis the Design of the GOSPEL to promote the Practice of it.

EVERY Thing here is plain and uncontroverted, and has the universal Consent of Mankind; so that nothing will excuse a Defect here, because this is what every Man may know. And he that can allow himself in the Neglect of these plain Duties, is not likely to make any great Proficiency in the School of CHRIST. In a word, The best Men will always make the best Christians; and they that

that are moſt Devout towards GOD, and moſt Charitable to their Neighbours, are, of all Perſons, the fitteſt to embrace the Faith of CHRIST, and to practice thoſe ſublime and heavenly Duties which He has taught us. SERM. VI.

FOR ſuch as theſe, will never be deſtitute of that Light and Aſſiſtance which is neceſſary to enable them to diſcharge their Duty. Where GOD ſees Men ſo well-diſpoſed, and ſo ready to thoſe Good Works which He originally deſigned them to walk in; he will create them over again in his Son CHRIST JESUS. He will renew His Image in them, and reſtore them to His Likeneſs. He will direct and guide them by His SPIRIT into all Goodneſs here, and receive them into endleſs Glory and Happineſs hereafter.

VI.

VII

1 JOHN iii. 7.

Little Children, let no Man deceive you: He that doth Righteouſneſs, is righteous, even as he is righteous.

THAT Righteouſneſs is indiſpenſably neceſſary in order to our Acceptance and Juſtification, is undeniably evident from Holy Scripture. Our SAVIOUR, deſcribing to us the Proceſs of the Laſt Day, which will put an End to this World and to all the Diſpenſations belonging to the Sons of *Adam*; concludes his Deſcription with theſe remarkable Words, That *the Wicked ſhall go away into everlaſting* Puniſh-

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Puniſhment, but the Righteous into Life Eternal, Matth. xxv. 46.

AND that Life Eternal is the peculiar Privilege of the Righteous, belonging to them, and to them only; St. *Paul* aſſures us, *Heb.* xii. 14. where he ſays, That *without Holineſs, no Man ſhall ſee the Lord.*

HENCE it is, that all who pretend to Religion, do at the ſame Time pretend to be righteous; well-knowing, that without this, their Religion is vain, and will be of no manner of Benefit to them.

SO that there is no Point of greater Importance, and which more concerns us to be truly reſolved in, than This; whether we be righteous Perſons, whether we be CHRIST's Diſciples indeed, good Chriſtians, and true Members incorporate in His Myſtical Body. For this is to have a right Knowledge of ourſelves, and our State and Condition towards GOD. Whether we are truly of the Number of the Elect, ſuch as are in Favour with GOD here, and ſhall be admitted to the Enjoyments of Him hereafter.

THOUGH

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THOUGH there be nothing more eaſy to be known than this, yet there is nothing which Men are more willing to miſtake; which is the Reaſon why the Apoſtle introduces his Determination of the Caſe with this Caution, *Little Children, let no Man deceive you; he that doth Righteouſneſs, is righteous, even as he is righteous.*

IN my following Diſcourſe, I ſhall conſider,

I. THE Caution which the Apoſtle interpoſes againſt our being deceived in the Opinion of ourſelves, and of our own Righteonſneſs. *Let no Man deceive you.*

II. THE Rule which the Apoſtle here gives us, whereby we are to judge of this Matter. *He that doth Righteouſneſs, is righteous.*

III. I WILL examine how far the Pattern or Example propoſed in the laſt Words of the *Text*, lays an Obligation upon us. *Even as he is righteous.*

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IV. AND *Laſtly*, I ſhall cloſe all with ſome brief Inferences and Obſervations.

I. I AM to conſider the *Caution* which the Apoſtle interpoſes againſt our being deceived in the Opinion of ourſelves, and of our own Righteouſneſs. *Let no Man deceive you.*

THIS Caution implies, that the Seducers of that Time were very zealous in their Endeavours to inſtil poiſonous Doctrines, and Principles of Licentiouſneſs: And ſeems to hint particularly at the *Gnoſticks*, who pretended to greater Degrees of Knowledge and Illumination than other Men, though at the ſame Time they freely indulged themſelves in the moſt vicious and impure Practices.

THEY taught that a true Faith was conſiſtent with a wicked Life; that a mere notional Knowledge was enough to recommend them, and make them acceptable to GOD; nay, That they were in a State of Perfection, and could not ſin; That thoſe Actions which would be great Sins in others, were none

none in them; but were ſanctified and freed from Immorality by a firm Faith, and pure Intention. SERM. VII.

THESE were ſome of the pernicious Doctrines of the *Gnoſticks*; and theſe the Apoſtle alludes to, in ſeveral Places of this Epiſtle.

AS to their Perfection and Freedom from Sin, he rejects it as a moſt vain Pretence and downright Falſhood: *If we ſay we have no Sin, we deceive ourſelves, and the Truth is not in us*, Chap. i. 8.

THOSE extraordinary Degrees of Knowledge and Illumination, which they ſo much boaſted of, while they lived in the open Breach of GOD's Commandments, are ſufficiently confuted, as well as plainly aimed at, *Chap.* ii. 4. *He that ſaith I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him.*

AND, to name no more, Their Opinion of the Sufficiency of believing and profeſſing Chriſtianity, to the making them righteous; and that the bare Will and Intention of doing Good Things, was equivalent to actual Goodneſs; is hinted at, and oppoſed in the

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Text: Let no Man deceive you; he that doth Righteouſneſs, is righteous.

THIS ſeems to be the Ground of this Caution of the Apoſtle's, and Theſe the Seducers and Errors of his Time, which he was ſollicitous to warn his Diſciples of, and to uſe his utmoſt Endeavours to prevent them from the ſpreading Infection.

THE ſame Caution is ſtill neceſſary, and the ſame Sollicitude becoming the Miniſters of the Goſpel, to preſerve their People from the ſame or the like Errors.

FOR there is nothing which Men are ſo apt to miſtake, as the true Nature of Righteouſneſs. Moſt Men are convinced of the Neceſſity of having it: And therefore every one is ready to fix upon ſomething for it; And they, who perhaps are conſcious that they have it not, will ſubſtitute ſome other Thing in its Room. The Devices of this Kind, which Men have ſought out, and whereby they deceive themſelves, are very many and various.

SOME make it an infallible Mark of a righteous Perſon and a Child of GOD, to be under ſome ſecret and irreſiſtible

irreſiſtible Impulſes of the SPIRIT; and think it a ſure Token of their being regenerated, that they can aſſign the very Moment of their Converſion. SERM. VII.

SOME place their Election in a groundleſs and confident Aſſurance of it: While others look upon Diffidence and Diſtruſt, nay even Deſpair, to be a much better Symptom; and cannot think themſelves in the Favour of GOD unleſs they have been firſt under His Diſpleaſure, and have felt it by Fearfulneſs and Trembling coming upon them, and an horrible Dread overwhelming them.

SOME take it to be the very Perfection of Righteouſneſs, to be in a State of Indolence and Inſenſibility; to be wrapped up in ſublime Thoughts, and unintelligible Notions and Meditations; to be in the utmoſt Pitch of Abſtraction and Abſence from the Body, utterly unmindful of every Thing that is about them, or concerns them.

OTHERS will be ſatisfied with nothing but Viſions and Revelations of the LORD; and cannot believe their Condition to be ſafe, unleſs they have

SERM. VII. had ſome ſecret Intimations of it, and the SPIRIT itſelf has born Teſtimony to it.

BUT theſe, and ſuch-like, are all of them idle Fancies and Follies, mere Dreams and Deluſions, and ſuch as can poſſeſs none but thoſe who labour under ſome Diſtemper of Body, or Diſorder of Mind.

THERE are beſides theſe, other Fallacies which Men have put upon themſelves, with a more ſpecious Appearance indeed, but with altogether as little Reaſon for their Foundation and Support.

SOME, I believe I might ſay, very many, content themſelves with a mere negative Righteouſneſs, with a bare Abſtinence from at leaſt any great and notorious Wickedneſs; and think themſelves Righteous Perſons, becauſe they cannot be charged with any very groſs Inſtances of Unrighteouſneſs; and that they are very Good, becauſe they are not very Bad.

THEY do not lead ſcandalous Lives; but their Converſation, in the main, is harmleſs, and innocent, and inoffenſive; And this they hope is ſufficient, if not to

entitle them to any great Reward, to ſecure them however from any great Puniſhment. SERM. VII.

SOME take an Eſtimate of themſelves and their Condition from other Men; and becauſe they ſee very many, perhaps the Generality of Mankind as bad or worſe than themſelves, they look upon their own State to be ſafe and good.

THEY will not deny but they are guilty of ſome Sins; but then they can ſee None without their Faults. Nay, they find, to their great Comfort, as they think, that they ſtand perfectly free from many Vices which others are deeply engaged in; and are very ſtrict in the Practice of ſeveral Virtues, which others neglect. And hence they are apt to expreſs themſelves in the Words of the Proud *Phariſee*; *O God, I thank thee, that I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, Unjuſt, Adulterers, or even as this* Publican. *I Faſt twice in the Week, I give Tithes of all that I poſſeſs*, Luke xviii. 11, 12.

SOME rely upon the bare outward Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, or their being Members of ſome particular Church; and

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and think, that That gives them a good general Title to all the Benefits and Privileges of the GOSPEL.

OTHERS ſatisfy themſelves with ſome Acts of Repentance, which they punctaally perform at ſome ſet certain Times; and though they allow themſelves in ſome Sins, yet they think by this Means they ſatisfy GOD as well as themſelves, and ſhall ſecure his Favour at the laſt.

OTHERS who live wickedly at preſent, do not deſign to continue ſo all their Lives; but intend to take up ſome time or other, and reſolve to be good then all the remaining Part of their Days. And theſe good Intentions and Reſolutions, they look upon as good Signs that they are not Reprobates; but do ſtill belong to GOD, and that His Seed remaineth in them.

THERE are many who think to atone for ſome Sins, by the Practice of other Virtues; eſpecially if their Virtues be of a publick Nature, and ſuch as will gain them Credit and Reputation in the World. If they are Juſt and Merciful, Liberal and Charitable, and have got the good Opinion of Men

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on their Sides, and are well ſpoken of; they are apt to truſt in themſelves that they are righteous Perſons, and that they ſhall be acceptable to GOD, becauſe they are approved of Men. SERM. VII.

Laſtly, THE Generality of Men are apt to rely upon their external Performances in Religion, and to think that true Piety and Holineſs conſiſt in them.

THEY frequent the Church, and are conſtant at their Devotions. They pray to GOD, and praiſe his Name; they read and hear his Word; they never abſent themſelves from the Table of the LORD, but receive the Bleſſed Sacrament as often as they have an Opportunity. They go on in a certain and ſettled Courſe of Duties, and conſtant Round of Performances; and imagine themſelves in a very hopeful Way, as long as they are thus employed.

NOW all theſe Things are certainly very Good, and by no Means to be diſcouraged; they are admirable Helps, and excellent Means of true Piety. And if the other Parts of our Lives be of apiece with theſe Performances, and anſwerable to them; they are a Service

acceptable

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acceptable to GOD. But true Religion is very far from conſiſting in theſe Things. The Impiety of our Lives will ſpoil all theſe Acts of Devotion, will turn even our Prayers into Sin, and render all our religious Worſhip an Abomination to the LORD.

THESE are ſome of the prevailing Errors of Men concerning their own Righteouſneſs, and which make the Caution in the *Text* not only very ſeaſonable, but neceſſary.

THIS is a Matter of ſuch Importance, that the Scripture is very frequent in giving us Cautions of this Kind, and warning us of this Danger. Thus 1 *Cor.* vi. 9. *Know ye not, that the Unrighteous ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of* GOD? *Be not deceived.* —— And then the Apoſtle goes on to enumerate ſeveral Vices, which the *Corinthians* before their Converſion were guilty of, and which, if they ſtill continued in them, would certainly exclude them from Heaven.

IN *Chap.* xv. 33. of that Epiſtle, he repeats the ſame Caution, and bids them take heed that they be not miſled by the looſe Diſcourſes of prophane and wicked

wicked Men: *Be not deceived; evil Com-* SERM.
munications corrupt good Manners. A- VII.
wake to Righteouſneſs, and ſin not. The ſame Apoſtle, *Gal.* vi. 7. makes uſe of the ſame Words; *Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatſoever a Man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap.*

AND, to name no more Places, St. *James*, Chap. i. 16. having confuted that impious Opinion, of GOD's being the Cauſe of Mens Sins; gives them a general Caution againſt all ſuch Errors as thoſe. *Do not err, my beloved Brethren.*

FROM all which Cautions ſo often repeated, 'tis very evident that Men are ſtrongly inclined to deceive others, and be deceived themſelves in this Matter. To prevent which, the Apoſtle has here given us a plain *Rule*, whereby we may judge of ourſelves, and know the Truth of our Spiritual State and Condition. *He that doth Righteouſneſs, is Righteous.* Which *Rule*, I come now in the

II. PLACE to conſider, and explain.

RIGHTEOUSNESS is a Word of a very comprehenſive Signification, and includes

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cludes univerſal Goodneſs; the Conformity of the whole Man to the whole Will of GOD; the being and doing every Thing which either by Reaſon or Revelation we find ourſelves obliged to. This is what we are to underſtand by *Righteouſneſs*. And this plainly ſhows what is meant by doing Righteouſneſs: Namely, the actual Performance of our Duty, in every Part of it; the doing all thoſe Good Works which GOD hath appointed us to walk in; and doing theſe out of a right Principle, out of a Senſe of Duty and Conſcience.

THUS *Grotius* deſcribes thoſe that are Righteous, in his *Comment* upon this Epiſtle; *Quorum & opera ſunt bona, & ex bono proficiſcuntur animo:* Whoſe Works are Good, and done out of a good Mind, *i. e.* proceed from an honeſt and good Intention.

SO that this Deſcription of a Righteous Perſon, or the Rule whereby we may know when we are ſuch, conſiſts of Two Parts.

1. THE actual Performance of Good Works.

2. THE

2. THE doing theſe Good Works with a ſincere and upright Mind. SERM. VII.

1. IN every Righteous Perſon there muſt be an actual Performance of Good Works.

OUR Lives muſt be conformable to the Will and Laws of GOD, by doing thoſe Things which He commands us, and forbearing thoſe which He has forbid. And this Conformity of our Lives to the Laws of GOD, muſt be uniform and univerſal: It muſt extend to every Thing which is Matter of Sin and Duty, and continue through the whole Courſe of our Lives.

BUT this is not to be taken in the utmoſt Rigor and Strictneſs; *For who then could be ſaved?* ſince there are none thus Righteous, no not one. It muſt therefore neceſſarily be underſtood in a Senſe which comes ſhort of perfect unſinning Obedience.

THIS actual Performance of Good Works, and Conformity of our Lives to all the Commandments of GOD, muſt be interpreted according to the Meaſures of a Man, according to the beſt of our Capacities and Abilities, and conſiſtent with human Frailties and Imperfections.

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perfections. But the Conſideration of this, will fall more properly under my next Head of Diſcourſe.

HOWEVER; this Abatement of the Rigor of the Rule, does not alter the Nature of it.

THE Rule is ſtill the ſame, and plainly teaches us, That the Character of a Righteous Man belongs to him, and to him only, who doth Righteouſneſs. There muſt be an actual Conformity of our Lives to the Laws of GOD; the real Practice of Piety and Virtue in our Lives and Converſations, in our Demeanour towards GOD, our Neighbour, and ourſelves; in order to make us Righteous Perſons, and procure us Acceptance with GOD, as ſuch. And this is to be underſtood according to the beſt of our honeſt and ſincere Endeavours, and in the main Courſe and Tenor of our Lives, the general Bent and Tendency of our Actions.

THE Good Actions which we do, and the Virtues which we actually put in Practice, are the Meaſure of our Goodneſs, and the Standard by which we are to eſtimate our own Virtue. So far as we do Righteouſneſs, we are Righteous;

Righteous; and no farther. Theſe Two bear a certain and conſtant Proportion to one another; and the one can never exceed, or riſe higher than the other. SERM. VII.

Now by this Rule we are enabled to diſcover the Fallacy of thoſe Reaſonings, which I mentioned under my laſt Head; whereby Men perſuade themſelves into a good Opinion of themſelves and their own Condition, and that they are righteous Perſons, when that Character by no means belong to them.

'Tis evident from this Rule in the the *Text*, that a bare negative Righteouſneſs, an Abſtinence from that which is Evil, is not enough to denominate any one Good and Righteous. The *Text* requires us to do Righteouſneſs, and not only to forbear Wickedneſs. To perform Good Works, and not only to abſtain from Bad ones. To be active and vigorous in the Cauſe of Religion and Virtue; and not only to be paſſive and ſtand neuter, and to do neither Good nor Evil. So that a harmleſs, ſluggiſh, inoffenſive Life, free from open Scandal and Immorality, is not ſufficient to juſtify us before GOD. We muſt be fruitful in Good Works, exem-

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plary for our Piety and Virtue. We muſt do all the Good we can; and practice every Virtue, as far as Opportunity offers, and our Abilities concur.

'TIS further manifeſt from this Rule, That a bare Belief or outward Profeſſion of Religion, that an exact Performance of all the external Acts of Worſhip and Devotion, are not enough to entitle us to the Character of being Righteous; ſince theſe may be, and too often are found to be, without Righteouſneſs; and they who are the moſt punctual in theſe Performances, are not always Doers of Righteouſneſs.

'TIS alſo plain from this Rule, That good Reſolutions and Intentions of doing well, any Thoughts or Purpoſes which we may have of holy Living, are not in themſelves able to make us paſs for righteous Perſons with GOD. Theſe may be good Beginnings, and ought for that Reaſon to be cheriſhed and encouraged; but they muſt not be finally reſted in. If we ſtop here, if we only intend or reſolve to do Righteouſneſs, we are far enough from being righteous. Nothing which comes

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ſhort of doing Righteouſneſs, will make us ſuch. He that doth Righteouſneſs, and only he, is righteous. SERM. VII.

THERE is indeed one Caſe, and but one that I know of, where the Will is accepted for the Deed; and that is, where the Deed itſelf is impoſſible, and this Impoſſibility is not owing to our Fault.

IN that Caſe 'tis ſufficient that we be willing and deſirous to have the Thing done, and that we are firmly purpoſed and reſolved to do it, if it was in our Power. Thus in the Caſe of new Converts to Chriſtianity: Whoever upon his hearing of the Goſpel preached, and having the Terms of the New Covenant laid before him, reſolves to embrace it, and ſtedfaſtly believes on CHRIST, that He is the Son of GOD, and ſent to make theſe Overtures to the World, and ſincerely intends to give up Himſelf entirely to the Obedience of His Laws: This Man ſhall have all his paſt Sins forgiven him upon Account of his believing on CHRIST; and not only ſo, but if he ſhould die then, his Faith ſhall be imputed to him for Righteouſneſs, and

SERM. VII. his ſincere Intentions of living agreeably to the Rules of the Goſpel will be accepted inſtead of a Holy Life, becauſe he has no Opportunity of doing any Thing more than this.

BUT if the Man lives after his embracing Chriſtianity; his believing on CHRIST, and intending and reſolving to live according to His Goſpel, will not ſerve the Turn; becauſe there is now an Opportunity of doing ſo. And though a Deſire, and Intention or Reſolution of doing any Thing, when 'tis ſincere, will be accepted for the Deed, where there is no Room left for the Deed itſelf; yet where there is Room and Opportunity for doing a Thing, 'tis unreaſonable that the bare Deſire ſhould be accepted.

BESIDES: if our Deſires, our Intentions and Reſolutions do not proceed to Action, when we have Time and Opportunity for ſo doing; 'tis a plain Proof that they were not ſincere: which is the only Reaſon why they were accepted when there was no Room for Action.

GOD who ſees and knows our Hearts, knows whether we be ſincere in

in our Intentions or no; and if we be ſincere, 'tis the ſame Thing to Him whether we have an Opportunity of ſhowing it by any Overt-Acts or not. So that if we die in our Integrity, we are ſafe. And if we live, our Integrity and Sincerity will moſt certainly ſhow themſelves in doing Righteouſneſs, in the Fruits of a good Life. SERM. VII.

AND This is all the Virtue and Efficacy which the Scripture attributes to Faith; That it ſhall be imputed to us for Righteouſneſs, where there is no Time or Opportunity of performing actual Righteouſneſs, and doing Good Works. And ſuch is the Nature of true Faith, of a firm Belief of thoſe Things which the Goſpel has propoſed to us; that where there is Time and Opportunity given us, it will certainly produce a good Life.

WE ſee then that a bare Profeſſion and Belief of Chriſtianity is ſo far from excuſing us from doing Righteouſneſs, that, of all Things in the World, it lays the greateſt Obligations upon us to do Righteouſneſs. And if our Faith and Belief of Chriſtianity be genuine

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and true, this will be the Effect of it. Intentions and Reſolutions of living righteouſly, of doing GOD's Will, and obeying His Commands, are highly becoming and neceſſary; but theſe Reſolutions and Intentions, are not Righteouſneſs and Obedience; though, if they be ſincere, they will produce them in us.

THE Rule then ſtill holds good: and to them who have Time and Opportunity before them, doing Righteouſneſs is abſolutely neceſſary to make them righteous; and none are righteous but ſuch. There muſt be an actual Conformity of their Lives to the Laws of GOD. They muſt live in the conſtant Practice of univerſal Piety and Virtue, and behave themſelves ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World.

AND if this be the Caſe, 'tis very evident, that they who live in the general Courſe of a wicked Life; in the frequent Practice of many great and known Sins, ſerving divers Luſts and Pleaſures: who allow themſelves in Acts of Injuſtice and Cruelty, in Force or Fraud; in Intemperance and Senſuality;

ſuality; in an open Neglect or Contempt of GOD and Religion: I ſay, 'tis evident that ſuch Perſons as theſe, have no Pretence to the Character of Righteous. They are ſo far from doing Righteouſneſs, that they do Wickedneſs, and are therefore undoubtedly wicked. SERM. VII.

AND not only a general Courſe of a wicked Life, but the habitual Practice of any one known Sin, is enough to deprive us of the Character of being Righteous, and denominate us Wicked.

NAY, there are ſome Sins of ſuch an heinous Nature, that one ſingle deliberate Act is inconſiſtent with a State of Righteouſneſs, and ſhows that we are deſtitute of a true Principle of Virtue, and have no Love for GOD or Goodneſs.

AND this may ſuffice for Explication of the firſt Part of this Rule, whereby we are to judge of our own Righteouſneſs; that is, doing Righteouſneſs, or the actual Performance of Good Works.

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2. THE Second Thing was, doing theſe Good Works with a ſincere and upright Mind.

THIS is ſo evidently eſſential to true Righteouſneſs, that I need not enlarge much upon it.

WHATEVER we do in Religion, and which deſerves that ſacred Name; muſt be directed to GOD and another World; it muſt be done out of Regard to our Great CREATOR, out of a Senſe of that Duty and Obedience which we owe Him, and the Obligations we lie under to Him; out of due Gratitude for what He has already done for us, and what He has promiſed us for the future.

WHATEVER we do in Religion, we muſt *do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto Men; knowing that of the Lord we ſhall receive the Reward of the Inheritance.*

IF we be Doers of Righteouſneſs out of any other Principles than theſe; if we calculate our Good Works for low and temporal Ends, to be ſeen of Men, and to gain ourſelves Credit and Reputation in the World: If we make a Gain of Godlineſs, and uſe Religion

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for a Cloak to cover our Wickedneſs, that we may the more eaſily impoſe upon the World, and carry on any ill Deſigns without Suſpicion: If any Thing of this Kind be at the Bottom of our Religion, our Religion is not only vain and unprofitable, but degenerates into the greateſt Impiety and Prophaneſs; and we ſhall be ſo far from being Doers of Righteouſneſs, that we ſhall be eſteemed the greateſt of Sinners. SERM. VII.

III. I COME now in the Third Place, to examine *How far* the Pattern or Example propoſed to us in the laſt Words of the *Text*, lays an Obligation upon us; *Even as He is Righteous.*

HE *that doth Righteouſneſs, is righteous, even as He is Righteous, i. e.* as ſome interpret it, even as GOD is Righteous. Others underſtand it of our SAVIOUR, which Senſe the *Context* ſeems moſt to favour.

IF we take it thus, the Apoſtle ſeems to allude to thoſe Words of our SAVIOUR, *John* XV. 10. *If ye keep my Commandments, ye ſhall abide in my Love: even as I have kept my Father's Commandments, and abide in his Love.*

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WHICHSOEVER of theſe Senſes we take the Words in, whether we underſtand them of GOD, or of CHRIST; 'tis all one; ſince both of them are infinitely perfect, and are frequently propoſed to us in Scripture for our Imitation. *Be ye holy, for I am Holy. Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is Perfect.* We are commanded to walk as CHRIST walked; and in the 3d Verſe of this Chapter, to *purify ourſelves, even as He is Pure.*

NOW this being a Pattern of infinite Perfection, it cannot oblige us to come up to an Equality with it; for that is inconſiſtent with the Imperfections and Infirmities of our Nature, with human Weakneſs and Frailty.

BUT this Pattern being propoſed to us, does oblige us to ſuch an Imitation of it, as is within our Power. And this both as to Kind, and Degree.

AS we are made after the Divine Image and Likeneſs with reſpect to our Rational Part, our Souls; ſo 'tis the proper Buſineſs of that Part of us, to aſpire after a nearer Likeneſs and Reſemblance to GOD in his Moral Excellencies and Perfections. As the Holi-

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neſs or Righteouſneſs of GOD conſiſts in the Integrity or Rectitude of His Will, by which He conſtantly approves and purſues the Things that are moſt Excellent, and never varies from the eternal Rule of Right in any of His Diſpenſations: So our Righteouſneſs muſt conſiſt in the Conformity of our Wills to the ſame Rule, in the inward Reconciliation of our Minds and Tempers to univerſal Righteouſneſs: In loving and approving every Thing that is truly Good, and bringing ourſelves to a perfect Concord and Agreement with it. This is being Righteous, as He is Righteous; Not the bare outward Performance of Righteouſneſs, but having it within us as a vital living Principle, which conſtantly and ſteadily determines our Actions to univerſal Goodneſs: Such a right and regular Frame and Diſpoſition of Soul, as will give a virtuous Turn to our Lives and Actions, and incline them to the Side of Religion. SERM. VII.

As to the Degree of Righteouſneſs, we muſt neceſſarily fall infinitely ſhort of the Pattern which is ſet before us in the *Text*.

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HOWEVER, this Pattern being propoſed to us, obliges us to uſe our utmoſt Diligence and Endeavours to abound in all manner of holy Converſation, and to be fruitful in every Good Work: To be as perfect in every Grace and Virtue, as this State of Imperfection will admit; and to reſemble the Holineſs of the Divine Nature, as far as is conſiſtent with the Capacities and Meaſures of a Man. This obliges us to be always exerciſing our Strength in this Work; to be watchful over our Sins and Failings, and vigorous in the Exerciſe and Improvement of our Virtues: Never to ſtand idle, and let our Work lie ſtill; not to be ſlothful in this Buſineſs, and let it ſtop; but to be always carrying it forward, aiming at ſtill farther Degrees of Goodneſs; and, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *going on unto Perfection*, *Heb.* vi. 1.

THIS is what the Pattern here propoſed, obliges us to. There can be no Bounds or Limits ſet to our Imitation of it: We are to come up as near to it as we are able; and the nearer the better. We are obliged to be ſincere

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in theſe Endeavours, and to carry them as far as we are able. And whether we be ſincere, and do every thing of this Kind to the utmoſt of our Power, will be referred to GOD and our own Conſciences. SERM. VII.

IV. FROM what has been ſaid, we may learn,

1. HOW to judge with Certainty of our own State and Condition towards GOD, and to know whether it be good or bad.

WE ſee that none are righteous, but they that do Righteouſneſs, and do it out of a right Principle, with a ſincere and upright Mind.

NOW theſe are Things which every Man may certainly know of himſelf.

EVERY Man may know whether the general Courſe of his Life be agreeable to the Laws of GOD, or no; whether he lives in the conſtant Practice, or the habitual Neglect of the great Duties of the Chriſtian Life; whether his Belief and Profeſſion of Chriſtianity has worked any Reformation and Amendment in his Life; or whether he is ſtill the ſame Man he was, and his Life

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Life as bad as Theirs who do not pretend to believe or obey the Goſpel.

AND by theſe Things every Man may judge what his State and Condition is, whether he be righteous or wicked.

HE that can ſay, I was by natural Temper and Inclination, or by vicious Cuſtoms and Habits, thus and thus; but the Belief and Profeſſion of Chriſtianity hath given me a new Nature, and furniſhed me with a new Principle of Action: And tho' I was once a Doer of Wickedneſs, yet I am now a Doer of Righteouſneſs: Though I was addicted to Impiety and Prophaneſs, to Injuſtice and Cruelty, to Intemperance and Senſuality; yet by the Grace of GOD, and the Power of Faith, I am what I am, quite another Man than I was before; and do now *live righteouſly, ſoberly, and godly in this preſent World*: He that can truly ſay this of himſelf, has Reaſon to believe himſelf in a good Condition. And whether this be true of any Man, any Man may certainly know; and likewiſe whether he practices theſe Virtues out of a religious Principle,

Principle, or out of worldly Conſide- SERM. VII.
rations. Thus far every Man, who will take the Pains to ſearch his own Heart, may certainly know it.

NOW ſo much as there is in the World, of this; ſo much true Religion there is in it, and no more. So many as there are who can thus approve themſelves to GOD, ſo many Righteous Perſons there are, and no more.

HE that cannot ſay this of himſelf: He that, notwithſtanding his Profeſſion and Belief of the Goſpel, finds little or no Alteration in himſelf, and diſcovers none in his Life and Actions; but goes on in an habitual Courſe of Wickedneſs, or allows himſelf in any ſingle deliberate Acts, as much as if he never heard of the Goſpel, or in ſuch a manner as is perfectly inconſiſtent with the Terms of the Goſpel: This Man, whatever Pretences he makes to Righteouſneſs, has no Claim to that Character, nor any Title to the Reward of ſuch.

2. THIS may ſerve to direct us what to do, in any Doubts or Diſquiet we may be under concerning our ſpiritual Condition.

WHEN-

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WHENEVER we find any inward Trouble or Uneaſineſs of this Kind, we ſhould enter upon an Examination of our Lives and Actions, to ſee what Ground or Foundation there is for our Trouble.

IF we find, upon an impartial Survey of our Lives, that they bear little or no Conformity with the Laws of GOD; if we can diſcern in them many, not only Failings and Imperfections, but groſs Sins, and wilful Tranſgreſſions: We may well be troubled and uneaſy; And 'tis well for us that we are ſo, becauſe we have great Reaſon to be ſo; and our being thus ſenſible and fearful of our Danger, will put us upon uſing the proper Means of getting out of it as ſoon as we can. And This is a much better State than Inſenſibility and Security.

THE proper Advice therefore, and indeed the only Advice to be given to ſuch Perſons, is, to leave their Sins, and become better Men, and to ſet all right by a ſpeedy Repentance, and Amendment.

IF, upon the moſt diligent Examination of ourſelves, and our Actions, we cannot

cannot accuſe ourſelves of any great Neglect of our Duty, much leſs of any groſs Tranſgreſſions of it: If we find that our Lives, in the main Courſe and Tenor of them, have been agreeable to the Goſpel; and our Heart does not reproach us with any Wickedneſs: And yet we cannot ſatisfy ourſelves, or quiet our Fears, but are troubled frequently with melancholy and deſponding Thoughts, and are afraid that we are not ſuch as GOD will accept; that we are not thoſe Righteous Perſons which He requires us to be: In order to remove theſe Doubts, we ſhould conſider, that perfect unſinning Obedience is not required or expected from us, but only ſuch an Obedience, ſuch a Degree of Righteouſneſs, as is in our Power. And if we be ſincere in this, we ſhall be accepted; And none of theſe Frailties and Imperfections, which now give us ſo much Diſturbance, ſhall ever riſe up in Judgment againſt us: They are ſuch as the Grace of the Goſpel, in and through the Merits of our Bleſſed SAVIOUR, has promiſed to pardon and forgive. SERM. VII.

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HOWEVER; the Trouble which they give us, may have this good Effect upon us, to make us watchfull over them, and ſtrive againſt them to the utmoſt of our Power: And this is all that is incumbent on us.

3*dly* and *Laſtly*, HENCE it appears how vain the Hopes of the Wicked are, and what little Reaſon they have to preſume upon the Mercy and Favour of GOD, while they go on in a Courſe of Sin and Impiety: Since the Righteous only ſhall inherit Eternal Life, and none are righteous but they that do Righteouſneſs.

THIS is the Mark, into which all the Characters and Signs which the Scripture gives us of Good Men, are finally reſolved. Without this, there is nothing that will hold out at the long Run, and avail us at the laſt! Whatever other Foundation we build upon, will certainly fail us.

LET no Man therefore deceive us, and let us not deceive ourſelves; but let us be perſuaded to ſet about this one Thing needful, being righteous and doing Righteouſneſs. And let us never be at reſt, 'till we have brought ourſelves

ourſelves to this State and Condition; SERM. 'till we have this Teſtimony from our VII. Conſciences, that we are Doers of Righteouſneſs, that we have denied Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, and live in the actual Practice and Exerciſe of Sobriety, Righteouſneſs, and Godlineſs in this preſent World. Then may we take Comfort to ourſelves, and ſhall have Confidence towards GOD. *For the Righteous Lord loveth Righteouſneſs, and His Countenance will behold the Thing that is juſt. And if we have our Fruit unto Holineſs, our End will be Everlaſting Life.*

2 Tim. iii. 4.

—— *Lovers of Pleaſures, more than Lovers of* God.

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THE Apoſtle in the Beginning of this Chapter, by a prophetick Spirit, foretells *Timothy* of a great and dangerous Apoſtacy which would happen in the latter Days, wherein many would make Shipwrack of their Faith and a good Conſcience, and renounce both the Principles and Practice of Chriſtianity.

This *know, that in the laſt Days perilous Times ſhall come*, Ver. 1.

And the better to arm him againſt this approaching Danger, and ſecure

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him from theſe wicked Men; he deſcribes their Character, and gives him a Catalogue of the Vices by which they might be known and diſtinguiſhed.

FOR *Men*, ſays he, *ſhall be Lovers of their own ſelves, Covetous, Boaſters, Proud, Blaſphemers, diſobedient to Parents, Unthankful, Unholy, without natural Affection, Truce-breakers, falſe Accuſers, Incontinent, Fierce, Deſpiſers of thoſe that are Good, Traitors, Heady, High-minded, Lovers of Pleaſures more than Lovers of God.*

AND here it may not be amiſs to obſerve, that the Apoſtle begins this Catalogue of Vices with Self-love, as that which is the Root from whence the reſt do naturally ſpring.

'TIS this that firſt alienates our Hearts and Affections from GOD, and is the Inlet to all the Vices here enumerated.

SELF-LOVE has an immediate Tendency to Covetouſneſs; and by ſetting too great a Value upon ourſelves, becomes the Cauſe of Boaſting and Pride; and this leads on to Blaſphemy and Diſobedience, and ſo of the reſt. And the

the Apoſtle finiſhes his Catalogue with the Love of Pleaſures, as that which perfects and compleats what Self-love only began. SERM. VIII.

AN immoderate Love of ourſelves, I mean of our Bodies, the leaſt and worſt Part of ourſelves; is that which firſt draws our Minds off from GOD, and prompts us to Pleaſure; *The Love of which*, will certainly ſet us at a greater Diſtance from GOD, and widen that Breach which Self-love began.

FOR the Love of ſenſual Pleaſures is inconſiſtent with the Love of GOD; and whenever our Duty interferes with our Pleaſure, if *This* be the ruling Principle in us, it will incline us to prefer the Gratification of our own Luſts before the Will of GOD.

'TWAS this fatal Bait that deceived our firſt Parents, and loſt them Paradiſe. And this is the Sin which ſo eaſily beſets, and ſo often betrays Us their unhappy Off-ſpring.

WE are daily ſurrounded with Temptations of this Kind. This Body of Fleſh which we conſtantly carry about us too often proves the Body of Sin.

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'Tis compoſed of various Organs capable of receiving pleaſing Senſations, and the World we live in is ſtored with ſuitable Objects of Delight.

WHEREVER we go, which way ſoever we turn, Pleaſures preſent themſelves freely to us; they appear in every Shape and Colour, wait all Opportunities of Admittance, and have all the Arts of Inſinuation. *They are about our Bed, and about our Path, and beſet us in all our Ways.*

SO that a due Regulation of our Pleaſures, is a Thing of the laſt Conſequence to a Chriſtian; And the greater Danger there is from them, the more watchful Eye muſt we have over them, that we fall not under the Character in the *Text*, of being *Lovers of Pleaſures, more than Lovers of God.*

PLEASURE or Pain, one or other of them, join themſelves to almoſt all our Ideas both of Senſation and Reflexion: And there is ſcarce any Affection of our Senſes from without, any retired Thought of our Mind within, which is not accompanied with one of theſe.

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We never find ourſelves in ſuch an equal Poiſe and indifferent Frame of Mind, as not to be affected with either of theſe; but Delight or Uneaſineſs, do more or leſs attend every Thing we do or think, and have their Turns through the whole Courſe of our Lives.

PLEASURE is inſeparably annexed to certain outward Senſations; It is founded in the Congruity and Agreement of the Object with the Faculty, and does unavoidably ſpring from the Impreſſions which the one makes upon, or receives from the other. So that the bare Senſe and Perception of Pleaſure can be no Fault, nor the Thing here condemned by the Apoſtle; becauſe 'tis the Law of our Nature, and reſults immediately from our Frame and Compoſition.

'TIS no more in our Power to hinder This, then 'tis to reſtrain the Seeing of the Eye, or the Hearing of the Ear, when each of theſe Organs are in due Diſpoſition, and meet with their proper Objects of Colours and Sounds,

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AND as the bare Perception of Pleaſure is no Fault, nor forbidden us; ſo neither is all Enjoyment, and Love of it, the Thing here condemned.

THE Character the Apoſtle gives of theſe wicked Men, is not only, that *they were Lovers of Pleaſure*; for That I ſhall ſhow to be very allowable in a due Meaſure and Degree; but that they were immoderate Lovers of it, they were *Lovers of Pleaſures, more than Lovers of* GOD.

FOR Pleaſure ſimply conſidered in itſelf is a natural Good; and ſo far to be loved and deſired. Nay, 'tis the the Gift of GOD, and for that Reaſon not to be rejected with Scorn, but to be enjoyed with Thankſgiving.

THUS the Wiſe Man, ſpeaking of the Things of this World, ſays, *I know that there is no good in them, but for a Man to rejoyce, and to do Good in his Life: And alſo that every Man ſhould eat and drink, and enjoy the Good of all his Labour, it is the Gift of* GOD, *Eccleſ.* iii. 12, 13.

AND indeed, were there no ſuch thing as Pleaſure to be met with here, or, which is the ſame thing to us, were

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we utterly forbid all Love and Enjoyment of it; Men would be very dull, unactive Beings, and Life itſelf a Burden. SERM. VIII.

AND therefore (as a great Philoſopher has well obſerved) "It has pleaſ-"ed the Infinite Wiſe Author of our "Beings, to joyn to ſeveral Thoughts, "and ſeveral Senſations, a Perception "of Delight. And if this were wholly "ſeparated from them, we ſhould have "no Reaſon to prefer one Thought or "Action to another; Negligence, to At-"tention; or Motion, to Reſt. And ſo "we ſhould neither ſtir our Bodies, "nor employ our Minds; but let our "Thoughts (if I may ſo call it) run "a-drift without any Direction or "Deſign.—— In which State, Man, "however furniſhed with the Facul-"ties of Underſtanding and Will, would "be a very idle unactive Creature, and "paſs his Time only in a lazy, lethar-"gick Dream."

AND it would be very eaſy, were it neceſſary, to illuſtrate and confirm this general Obſervation by particular Inſtances.

FOR Pleaſure is the main Spring of our Actions, and has contributed great-

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ly to the Improvement of human Life, by putting Men upon ſeveral uſeful Inventions and Diſcoveries; which, were it not for the Pleaſure they yielded, would never have been attempted.

NAY, thoſe Actions which are of the greateſt Uſe, and indiſpenſably neceſſary to Human Life, would be in Danger of being neglected; were not the Matter ſo ordered by Providence, that ſome agreeable Satisfaction ſhould always attend them; that our Senſes ſhould be feaſted as often as our Wants are ſupplied, and we be invited to our Refreſhments by Appetites as well as Reaſon; and not only by Neceſſity, but by Certainty of being gratified.

BESIDES; were all Pleaſure, and Enjoyment of the good Things of this Life, utterly unlawful; to what End did GOD create them? Why is the World ſo richly ſtored with delightful Objects, with every Thing *pleaſant to the Sight, and good for Food*, and Man made with ſuitable Faculties and Inclinations; if it be unlawful for us to touch or taſte them? This would be for GOD to tempt or tantalize his Creatures, and is the moſt injurious and impious

Gen. ii. 9.

impious Reflection upon his Goodneſs; who firſt kindly fitted theſe Things for a ſupply of our Neceſſities, and then bountifully beſtowed them upon us. SERM. VIII.

GOD pronounced every Thing which He had made, to be *Good*; and gave it to Man to enjoy. Gen. i. 29.

AND the Apoſtle tells us, That GOD created theſe Things to be received with Thankſgiving; and that nothing is to be refuſed, provided it be ſo received, 1 *Tim.* iv. 3, 4.

AND if GOD thought it not below Him to give us theſe Things, much leſs ought we to think it below us to receive them.

'TIS our Duty to receive and enjoy them, and reflect upon them with Satisfaction: To look upon them as the Gifts of GOD, and in a moderate Uſe of them to expreſs our Thankfulneſs, and excite our Gratitude to the Goodneſs of that Providence, which has made ſo liberal a Proviſion for us here below.

AND indeed, conſidering the many Miſeries and Misfortunes we are here expoſed to, the Toil and Travail we muſt here undergo; the innocent Enjoyments

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joyments and Diverſions of the World, are no more than what is neceſſary to ſupport us in our preſent State of Pilgrimage, to ſweeten and allay the Troubles of Life, to refreſh the Body and divert the Mind, to renew the whole Man, and make us able to perform the Part which belongs to us, and diſcharge thoſe Duties which GOD requires of us.

BUT notwithſtanding this, there are ſome, who (if we may believe them) are perfectly dead to all theſe Things, and feel no manner of Pleaſure in them; who can live in an utter Diſregard of the Body, and Abſtraction of Mind; can retire within themſelves, cut off all manner of Correſpondence with the World, and be continually raiſing and refining their Minds by the Study and Contemplation of ſublime Subjects, without ſo much as ever condeſcending to take Notice of any of theſe Enjoyments.

BUT this is to talk beyond the rate of Human Nature; and Experience will ſoon convince us that ſuch an Attempt is out of our Power; and common Rea-

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ſon may eaſily ſatisfy us that 'tis contrary to Duty. SERM. VIII.

HAD we been created pure Spirits, without any thing of Fleſh and Blood in our Compoſition; then indeed ſuch a Life as this, would have beſt becomed us. But as we are Men, and not Angels, we muſt live the Life of Men; and think nothing that is Human, unworthy our Concern.

NEXT to the Concerns of our Souls and another Life, the Body and this Life claim our Care; and is a Duty incumbent on us, and for which we muſt one Day account.

AND after all; let Men make what Pretences they pleaſe, there is no Man who is eaſy and proſperous, but will think this World a pleaſant Place.

'TIS vain and idle to ſay there is no Difference between a Prince and a Slave, between Riches and Poverty, Pleaſure and Pain. This is to perſuade Men out of their Senſes: for every one who has experienced theſe, finds a manifeſt Difference. And I believe they who would ſeem to fall out, and appear moſt angry with the World, are far

SERM. VIII. far from being the greateſt Strangers to its Pleaſures.

IT cannot therefore be denied, that there is ſuch a Thing as Pleaſure in this World, and that Man is made capable of receiving it.

IT muſt likewiſe be farther owned, that it is very allowable, and our Duty too, to take Pleaſure in this Life, and enjoy the Good Things that are preſent.

FOR Religion is not that ſullen, ſtoical Thing, which ſome Men repreſent it.

IT does not reſtrain us from any ſuch ſenſible Pleaſures, as are agreeable to Reaſon, and conſiſtent with our true Intereſt. It only prohibits all Miſtakes and Exceſſes about our Pleaſures; and teaches us ſo to regulate ourſelves in the Uſe of them, that they may truly deſerve that Name; which is rather a heightening than hindring of them.

ADD to this, That *Godlineſs has the Promiſe of this Life, as well as of that which is to come*; Temporal Happineſs and Proſperity is propoſed to us as a Reward of our Virtue; But to what

what Purpoſe would this be, if we might neither enjoy nor take Pleaſure in theſe outward Bleſſings? SERM. VIII.

UPON this Suppoſition, Length of Days would be a Puniſhment, inſtead of a Reward of our Obedience, *Eph.* vi. 2, 3. And the Meek could not be pronounced *Bleſſed*, for inheriting the Earth.

SO that a total Abſtinence from Pleaſure, is not enjoined us; but a prudent Moderation of it. A juſt Uſe of theſe Things is not only permitted but commanded us, and an unjuſt Abuſe is the only Thing condemned.

LET us therefore *ſtand faſt in that Liberty wherewith we are made free*, Gal. v. 1. only let us take great Care not to miſtake our Liberty, nor abuſe it, by making it an Opportunity of ſatisfying the Luſts of the Fleſh, *Ver.* 13.

TO contribute ſomething to the Prevention of ſo great and fatal an Evil, I ſhall

I. LAY down ſome few plain Rules and Directions, neceſſary to be obſerved for the due Regulation of our Pleaſures. Which when I have done,

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II. I SHALL make use of some Arguments, by way of Motives, to press you to the Practice of them.

I. I AM to lay down some few plain Rules and Directions, necessary to be observed for the due Regulation of our Pleasures, and which will keep us from coming under the Character in the *Text*, of being *Lovers of Pleasures, more than Lovers of God.*

NOW all Pleasures may be reduced to two Sorts.

1. SUCH as are in their own Nature directly sinful.

2. SUCH as, though innocent in themselves, become criminal by an undue Use and immoderate Enjoyment of them.

1. THERE are several Sorts or Instances of Pleasure directly sinful in themselves, and such as no Circumstances whatever can qualify and render lawful and allowable.

OF this Kind are all those Works of Darkness, those hideous Immoralities, which are the Aversion of the Light of Nature, and stand condemned by Heathen

then Sobriety, and are every where in Scripture ſentenced to utter Darkneſs as their proper Place of Puniſhment. SERM. VIII.

THUS *Epheſians* v. 3, 4. *&c.* the Apoſtle tells us, That theſe are ſuch filthy and abominable Practices, that it is a Shame for Chriſtians ſo much as to name them; and that they who are Partakers of them, have no Inheritance in the Kingdom of CHRIST, and of GOD.

ALL theſe Pleaſures (if they deſerve that Name) are inconſiſtent not only with the Sobriety of Chriſtians, but Dignity of Men.

THEY are notorious Violations of the Laws of Nature; and do groſsly contradict and pervert the eternal Reaſon, and immutable Order of Things.

THEY are ſo deteſtably Baſe and Vile, and have ſuch an inherent Turpitude in them, that the greateſt Examples can never patronize, nor the greateſt Wit and Sophiſtry palliate or excuſe them.

AND therefore the Apoſtle in the Place before cited, cautions us againſt being deceived with vain and empty Talk; and aſſures us, that theſe Things are in themſelves highly offenſive to GOD, and for which He will bring

SERM. VIII. the Heathen World to Judgment, Ver. 6. *Let no Man deceive you with vain Words; for becauſe of theſe Things, cometh the Wrath of* GOD *upon the Children of Diſobedience.*

AND ſo again, *Galatians* v. 19, &c. we have another Liſt of theſe abominable Vices; And in the Cloſe of it the Apoſtle adds, *Of the which I tell you before, as I have alſo told you in Time paſt, that they who do ſuch Things, ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of* GOD.

THESE Things have ſuch a Malignity in them, as no Dexterity or Management can qualify or cure; and therefore we are commanded under the ſevereſt Penalties wholly to refrain from them, in our Thoughts, Words, and Actions.

SO that theſe Pleaſures come not under our preſent Conſideration. They are not ſubject to any Rule, nor indeed can be; for they are founded in the Tranſgreſſion of all Rule, and therefore are not to be regulated, but totally rejected.

2. BUT then beſides theſe, there are, as has been ſhown, others, which are lawful and allowable, which we may, and

and ought to taſte of and enjoy, pro- SERM. vided it be with due Reſtraint, and VIII. according to the Rules of Chriſtian Moderation.

IN order to which I obſerve

1. THAT we ought not to make Pleaſure the ſole, and ultimate End of our Actions.

THE firſt and fundamental Error which Men fall into in this, as well as other Matters, is their not diſtinguiſhing between the Means and the End; but ſuffering thoſe Things which, by the Laws of GOD and Nature, are ordained only as Means neceſſary or uſeful for the attaining ſome better End, to intercept their Deſires of the End, which is good in itſelf, and deſireable for itſelf, and the Means only in order to that.

AND when our Deſires are thus intercepted, or diverted from the End unto the Means; 'tis natural for us to reſt finally in the Means, and make them our chief Care and Concern; which is a very great Abuſe.

FOR the Mind of Man ought not to purſue any End more ignoble than itſelf, and whoſe Perfections are lower than

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its own. For whatever a Man propoſes to himſelf as the ultimate End of any of his Actions, 'tis certain that therein he places ſome Part, at leaſt, of his Happineſs; and makes it the final Satisfaction of ſome of his Deſires.

BUT now, 'tis certain, that no ſenſual Pleaſures and Enjoyments can any Way make a Part of our real and true Happineſs, and give us full and final Satisfaction.

THIS is evident from that Vanity and Emptineſs, that Shortneſs and Uncertainty there is in all worldly Enjoyments.

NONE of theſe Things afford us perfect Eaſe and Contentment; but amidſt the greateſt Affluence and Plenty, we feel in ourſelves Wants which this World cannot ſupply, and Longings after ſomething which is no where here to be found.

BEASTS indeed reſt ſatisfied in the Enjoyments of Senſe, becauſe Life and ſenſual Enjoyments are their laſt End and chiefeſt Good, which they deſire for itſelf, as not being capable of any higher Attainments.

AND

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AND if the Soul of Man, with all thoſe noble Faculties of Reaſon and Underſtanding, were given him for no other Purpoſes but thoſe of this Life, and to continue him in Being; then the Things of this Life would content him as they do other Creatures, who look out no farther, and thereby plainly ſhow that there is no greater Good belonging to them.

BUT Man is manifeſtly unſatisfied with theſe Things; and by his longing Deſires, and Thirſtings after higher Enjoyments, ſeems to claim ſome greater Perfection and Happineſs than this World can give.

AND That, is nothing elſe but GOD Himſelf; whom to know, and ſerve, and worſhip, is Man's chiefeſt Delight in this World, and will be his final Reward in the next.

THIS made the Royal Pſalmiſt break out into that devout Rapture, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon Earth that I deſire in Compariſon of thee!* Pſal. lxxiii. 25.

HE is the Deſire of our Souls, the Ground of all our Hopes and Expectations. The only Good to be ſought for,

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for himſelf and His own Sake: The true and proper Object of all our Powers and Faculties; and whom if we truly ſerve and pleaſe in this World, our Deſires and Longings after him here, will end in endleſs Union with him hereafter.

THERE is then nothing in this World to be deſired ſimply for its own Sake, and which we may make the ultimate Deſign of any of our Actions. A good Conſcience and the Hope of Eternal Life, which though they may be had in this World, yet are not of the World; are the only Things which we ought to make our chief Care, and on which we may ſecurely fix our Happineſs.

ALL other Things muſt ultimately be referred to theſe; and none of them are to be finally reſted in, without any farther Views or Deſigns.

FOR the great Buſineſs of this Life is to prepare ourſelves for another; and GOD has allowed us the free Uſe of theſe Things to preſerve Life and Health, and to enable us to do all that which He requires of us in order to our Salvation.

AND therefore whenever we deſire and enjoy the good Things of this Life, purely for their own Sakes, and without attending to, or thinking upon this End: Whenever we ſet up our Reſt on this Side Heaven, and ſay in our Hearts, 'tis good for us to be here; and place our final Happineſs in theſe worldly Poſſeſſions: We are guilty of a principal Miſcarriage, and highly injure both GOD and ourſelves. SERM. VIII.

WE cheat and abuſe ourſelves, by placing our final End and greateſt Happineſs in that which is not ſo, and which is utterly incapable of advancing us to it.

WE highly affront and diſhonour GOD, by preferring the Enjoyment of finite and limited Creatures, the Works of His Hands, before Himſelf the Great CREATOR of them.

FOR GOD, who is the Original of our Beings, ought to be the final Scope and End of our Actions.

SO that to make Pleaſures the ſole End of our Actions, is to place them in GOD's Stead. And whenever we do this, whenever we ſeek theſe Things purely for the Gratifications of Senſe, and

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and acquieſce in them as our chief End and greateſt Good; this is in Effect to fall down and worſhip them, and is an evident Sign that we are *Lovers of Pleaſures, more than Lovers of God.*

2. IF it be unlawful to propoſe to ourſelves ſenſual Pleaſures, as the ultimate End and laſt Deſign of our Actions; it neceſſarily follows, that they are to be looked upon as Means only in order to ſome farther and higher End, and are to be uſed always for the Promotion of that End, or at leaſt in Subordination to it.

NOW the End for which theſe Pleaſures are allowed us, as appears from what has been ſaid, is to ſupport and comfort us in this preſent State, and enable us duly to diſcharge the ſeveral Duties incumbent on us.

AND therefore in all our Pleaſures, we muſt have an Eye to this End; and though they ſhould not always help it forward, we muſt be ſure never to ſuffer them to hinder it.

TO illuſtrate this by ſome few familiar Inſtances. The true End of Eating and Drinking, is the Preſervation of Life and Health, repairing our Strength, and

and recruiting our Spirits; and yet 'tis certain that in the Choice of our Meat and Drink, we may in ſome Meaſure conſult our Palate; otherwiſe to what End was the Senſe of Taſte given us? yet this cannot be ſaid to help forward the Ends of Eating and Drinking, only it does not hinder them. SERM. VIII.

BUT when we ſet ourſelves to ſtudy and contrive all imaginable Delicacies; as if the Ends of Eating were not for Health and Strength, but for gratifying the Appetite, and pampering the Body, to prepare it for the greater Enjoyment of the reſt of the Pleaſures of this World; This is a groſs Abuſe of theſe Bleſſings; and to act below, or rather contrary to the End we are deſigned for.

AGAIN; whenever in our Refreſhments we exceed the due Bounds of Temperance and Sobriety; and inſtead of recruiting and exhilarating Nature, we oppreſs and ſtupify it; and are ſo far from making ourſelves the more able to go through the Duties of our Station, that we render ourſelves for the preſent uncapable of any Employment, and greatly indiſpoſe ourſelves for the future; when inſtead of preſerving our Health, we

ruin

SERM. VIII. ruin our Conſtitutions, and ſhorten our Days; when we thus make our Table a Snare to us, and things which ſhould have been for our Health, through our own Fault prove our Ruine; this is undoubtedly a ſhameful Exceſs.

AND ſo again, as to our Apparel, which was deſigned as a Defence againſt Cold, and to cover Nakedneſs; we ought principally to regard theſe Ends; and yet 'tis allowable to go farther, and conſult Decency and Ornament, and to comply with the innocent Humour and Cuſtom of the Age and Place we live in: This we may, and I think ought to do; and for This Reaſon, becauſe every Man ought to avoid being contemned upon the account of the meanneſs and ſordidneſs of his Apparel, and to preſerve himſelf in ſuch Reſpect and Eſteem amongſt Men who are to apt to judge by outward Appearances, as may enable him to do the more Good in the World.

BUT to conſult the Pride and Pomp of Life, and cloath ourſelves like the Lilies of the Field, or *Solomon* in all his Glory, only to admire ourſelves, and be admired by others; is an intolerable Vanity.

OR

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OR when Apparel, inſtead of the fore-mentioned Ends, is by indiſcreet Faſhions made inſtrumental to Wickedneſs, and an Incentive to Luſt and Lewdneſs; this is an horrid Abomination.

THUS in our Food and Raiment we ſhould keep an Eye rather to Matter of Health and Strength, than to humouring the Fancy, or indulging the Palate: And ſhould never ſuffer ourſelves to be ſo far tranſported with a Deſire of theſe Things, and ſtudy Delicacy in our Meat and Softneſs in our Apparel; as if Life had been given us for no other End but to cloath ourſelves in Purple and fine Linnen, and fare ſumptuouſly every Day.

WHEREAS our Bleſſed SAVIOUR tells us, That *Life is more than Meat, and the Body than Raiment.* Which Words though ſpoken in another Senſe, are true alſo in this, that Life was given us for much higher Ends and Purpoſes than to feed and cloath ourſelves; and therefore Food and Raiment muſt be uſed always in Subordination to theſe Ends, and not as if they were the only Ends of Life. Matth. vi. 25.

AND

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AND what has been ſaid concerning theſe, may eaſily be applied to Riches, Honours, and Power, and to all Pleaſures which are not abſolutely unlawful; and to every Thing which Men value and purſue in this World; which they may lawfully ſeek after, and take Delight in, as far as they may be made the Inſtruments of doing Good, or conſiſtent with their Chriſtian Duty.

BUT whenever we find that they hinder us from doing Good, and break in upon our Duty, and involve us in Ambition, Covetouſneſs, Voluptuouſneſs, or the like; then 'tis high Time to refrain, if we would not be *Lovers of Pleaſures, more than Lovers of* GOD. Which brings me to a

3*d* Rule neceſſary for the Regulation of our Pleaſures; and that is,

THE Conſideration of ourſelves and our own Strength, and the Power and Influence which Pleaſures are apt to have over us.

SOME Sorts of Pleaſures, though never ſo innocent in themſelves, are not fit to be truſted with all Perſons; and That Meaſure and Degree which one Man

Man may lawfully take, may prove very prejudicial to another. SERM. VIII.

WE muſt never make any of theſe Things our Buſineſs; which ought to be uſed only as we do Sleep, and other Ways of Repoſe, to refreſh ourſelves after the Diſcharge of more ſerious and important Duties.

NOR muſt we ever ſuffer ourſelves to be enſlaved to thoſe Things, which we ought always to be Maſters of; ſo as to uſe them, or decline them, as we ſee Occaſion.

FOR whenever thoſe Things get ſuch an Intereſt in us, that we cannot reſiſt their Sollicitations, but are forced to go when or where they bid us, to come when they command, and do whatever they ſhall prompt us to; we ſhall then certainly prefer our own Luſts to the Will of GOD, and evidence our Love of Pleaſures above Him, whenever they come in Competition with Him.

WE muſt therefore in all our Pleaſures be ſure to keep the Reins in our own Hands, and carefully preſerve our Freedom, ſo as never to ſuffer any of theſe Things to captivate and enſnare us

SERM. VIII. us, to tempt us to Sin, or divert us from pursuing our main End.

AND that our Pleasures may never prove thus fatal, 'tis necessary for us wisely to weigh our own Strength, and guard our weakest Side.

WHATEVER Sort of Pleasure we find ourselves by Experience immoderately fond of, and which, when once admitted, is apt to get Ground and gain upon us; That we must be very cautious of. For where we are most apt to be transported, there we are always most apt to transgress. And therefore the best Way is wholly to avoid these, and take up with other Diversions, which, though less delightful, we are sure are less dangerous.

THUS for Instance; if Company and Conversation, which may be both innocent and useful, is apt to prove a Snare to us, and an Occasion of Sin: If we have not the Courage to rebuke Vice; but by suffering Sin in others, we bring it upon ourselves; Or if we want the Firmness and Resolution to resist the Importunities of wicked Men, and run with them into whatever Excesses they will lead us; if we find it thus with us,

us, that we cannot partake of the Socie- SERM.
ty of other Men, without partaking of VIII.
their Sins too; we muſt be very cauti-
ous of our Company, and ſparing in this
Sort of Pleaſure.

AGAIN; though all Games of Chance are not to be abſolutely condemned, yet if I cannot bear the Event with Evenneſs of Temper, and loſe without loſing the Command of myſelf: If theſe Things inſtead of proving a Diverſion become a Torment to us, by creating an Exceſs of Fear and Sollicitude: If they either incline us to Covetouſneſs, or expoſe us to the contrary Extream: If they make us betray thoſe Follies which every wiſe Man ſeeks to conceal, and inflame thoſe Paſſions which every Good Man labours to ſubdue: In this Caſe, however lawful in themſelves ſuch Diverſions may be, they are to be refrained from by all thoſe that are thus affected by them.

AND ſo in all other Inſtances; whatever Kind of Pleaſure we find too ſtrong for us: If we purſue it with Eagerneſs and Impatience, and are ſo captivated with, it that we cannot break off and

SERM. VIII. recall ourſelves whenever our Duty requires it:

IF it diſſipates our Thoughts too much; and creates ſuch a Levity and Wantonneſs of Spirit, as makes us unfit for Reflexion, and for the great and weighty Concerns of Religion:

WHATEVER Pleaſures have this Effect upon us, are unlawful for us to make uſe of.

SO likewiſe for the Meaſure and Degree of Pleaſures; 'tis not poſſible to mark out the exact Bounds, and fix the Point where Exceſs begins, and where we muſt break off, if we would be innocent.

FOR that which does not exceed the Bounds of Temperance in one Man, may be Exceſs in another. And therefore here again we muſt conſult ourſelves, and make our own Strength the Standard.

NOT that it is by any Means lawful for Men to take Advantage of their natural Strength, and go to the utmoſt they are able to bear.

FOR this is certainly an Exceſs too, and an unnatural Abuſe of that Health and Strength, which was given them, not

not that they might enjoy a greater De- SERM. gree of ſenſual and worldly Pleaſures, VIII. but that they might do the greater Good, and be more ſerviceable in their Generation.

AND therefore the Prophet juſtly denounces a Woe upon thoſe, who thus contradict this End. *Woe unto them that are mighty to drink Wine, and Men of Strength to mingle ſtrong Drink,* Iſaiah v. 22.

BUT yet our own Strength muſt be ſo far a Rule to us, that we muſt never exceed That in any of our Pleaſures; and that we may not do ſo, the ſafeſt Way will be to uſe a diſcreet Moderation, and not give ourſelves all the Liberty we may lawfully take.

FOR ſince Pleaſure is what our corrupt Nature is of itſelf too ſtrongly inclined to; if in the Enjoyment of it we truſt our Virtue too far, it will be apt to give us the Slip. If we accuſtom ourſelves to come up to the extream Bounds of Virtue, that border upon Vice; we ſhall find it difficult, eſpecially when any tempting Object appears, not to tranſgreſs.

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THE Sum is this.

SOME Men are of a firmer Conſtitution of Mind, have a more fixed and ſteady Temper, and a greater Command of themſelves and their Paſſions, than others. And theſe may certainly take greater Liberties in the innocent Diverſions and Entertainments of the World. They may ſafely go where it would be dangerous for others to venture, and enjoy more Pleaſure without being the worſe for it.

AND therefore we muſt not take Example by others, but conſult with ourſelves; And where Pleaſure has a great Power over us, and is apt to make too ſtrong and laſting Impreſſions upon us, we muſt uſe the greater Abſtinence to preſerve our Innocence.

FOR ſince GOD has graciouſly allowed us the free Uſe and Enjoyment of theſe Things, we muſt keep ſtrictly to this Rule, never to ſuffer them to rob Him of any of that Duty and Allegiance which we owe him. And therefore whatever Meaſure or Degree, whatever Sort or Kind of Pleaſure renders us leſs fit for His Service, is certainly to be avoided, or elſe we are plainly

Lovers

Lovers of Pleaſures, more than Lovers of GOD. SERM. VIII.

4. ANOTHER Thing to be conſidered in the Regulation of our Pleaſures and Recreations, is our Age and Place, the Function and Character we bear in the World.

EVERY Man ſhould obſerve a Decorum in his Diverſions, and ſuit and proportion them to his own Rank, and Quality, and Years.

ALL Things do not become all Men: and that which is very decent in one, would appear highly odious and unbecoming in another.

FOR every Man ought in the Choice of his Pleaſures to conſult and maintain his Credit and Character, and not do any Thing below himſelf, and unbecoming his Place and Station.

I WILL not charge all thoſe Pleaſures directly with Sin, which are not thus regulated; yet they may indirectly and conſequentially be the Occaſion of Sin, by giving Offence to others, (a Thing which every Good Chriſtian thinks himſelf concerned to avoid;) by making ourſelves little and contemptible in the Eye of the World, weaken-

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ing that Authority and Influence we might have upon others, and ſo hindring us from doing all that Good, which otherwiſe we might do, and which our Station requires of us; and laſtly by bringing a Blemiſh and Diſeſteem upon our Holy Profeſſion.

ST. *Paul* in his Epiſtle to *Titus*, *Chap.* ii. gives him a Charge to be careful of his Doctrine; and inſtructs him in the ſeveral Duties which he ſhould preſs upon his Hearers according to their ſeveral Ranks and Conditions, that they might adorn the Doctrine of GOD their Saviour *in all Things*: Not only in thoſe Duties which ſtrictly belong to Religion, but alſo in ſecular Concerns, and the Buſineſs of Converſation; nay in our very Recreations and Diverſions, which ought not to be without ſome Savour of Chriſtianity.

FOR Chriſtians ought always to remember that high Character they bear, and walk worthy that Vocation wherewith they are called; and not deſcend to thoſe little, unbecoming, and incongruous Actions, which other Men, who have any Regard for their Reputation, induſtriouſly avoid. THUS

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THUS the Apoſtle in the Place juſt now cited, begins his Inſtructions with a Leſſon for Aged Men, *ver.* 2. that they ſhould *be grave.*

EVERY Man ought to conſider his Age in his Recreations, and make uſe of ſuch as beſt become him.

FOR what more abſurd, than for one who is arrived at Man's Eſtate, to divert himſelf with the Trifles and Follies of Children? Or for an Old Man to take up with youthful Sports and Pleaſures? to be an exact Obſerver of all the Niceties of Apparel and Addreſs? to ſhun the Company and Converſation of his Equals, and be pleaſed with nothing ſo much as the Levities of Youth?

THIS is directly oppoſite to the Apoſtle's Words; which tho' not intended, will yet ſerve as a Rule in the preſent Caſe. *When I was a Child, I ſpake as a Child, I underſtood as a Child, I thought as a Child: But when I became a Man, I put away childiſh Things,* 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

AGAIN; for thoſe who have had the Advantage of a genteel and liberal Education, to delight in ſordid and ruſtick Sports, and vulgar Company and Con-

SERM. VIII. verſation, is another Offence againſt this Rule of Decency.

AND ſo, for Mens Callings and Functions; Theſe alſo are to be taken into Conſideration, and have their Diverſions ſo ſuited to their reſpective Natures, that there may no Contempt be derived upon the Profeſſion.

AGAIN, every Man's Rank and Station muſt likewiſe be attended to: The Majeſty of a Prince, the Dignity of a Ruler, the Authority of a Parent or a Maſter, and the like; All theſe are to be regarded, and diſtinguiſhed from others, in the Matter and Manner of their Recreations.

THUS muſt every Man conſult not only the Lawfulneſs, but alſo the Comelineſs of his Pleaſures; that they be ſuch as are agreeable to his Age and Place, the Function and Character he has in the World.

AND this though it may ſeem to be but of ſmall Moment in itſelf, yet 'tis attended with ſuch Conſequences, as make it a Point worthy our Study.

FOR a Chriſtian ought to carry himſelf with ſuch Care and Caution, that he may neither diſparage himſelf nor his Profeſſion,

Profeſſion. And ſince 'tis evident, that the not obſerving this Order in our Pleaſures, ſets Men upon a Level with one another, and tends to make them little and contemptible, and puts them under a manifeſt Diſadvantage in the Diſcharge of the Offices belonging to them: they that for the Sake of doing Good, will not ſubmit to theſe decent Reſtraints, may well be ſtiled *Lovers of Pleaſures, more than Lovers of* GOD. SERM. VIII.

5. THE laſt Rule I ſhall lay down for the Regulation of our Pleaſures, is to obſerve a fit Time and Seaſon in the Uſe of them.

THE Wiſe Man tells us, That *to every Thing there is a Seaſon, and a Time to every Purpoſe under the Sun. A Time to weep, and a Time to laugh: A Time to mourn, and a Time to dance.* AND whenever any Time or Seaſon calls for a more than ordinary Strictneſs and Severity; then to give ourſelves the greater Liberty and Looſeneſs, is a great Offence.

WHEN the Circumſtances of Affairs require Frugality, to be then moſt prodigal: When GOD expects Humility, to meet him with Pride. When He calls for

SERM. VIII. for Faſting, to appear before him with Fulneſs: is the higheſt Boldneſs and Impiety.

AND GOD has by his Prophet denounced very ſevere Threats againſt ſuch contemptuous Carriage.

Iſa. xxii. 12. IN *that Day did the* LORD GOD *of Hoſts call to Weeping and Mourning, and to Baldneſs, and to girding with Sackcloth; and behold, Joy and Gladneſs, ſlaying Oxen, and killing Sheep, eating Fleſh, and drinking Wine.—And it was revealed in mine Ears by the* LORD *of Hoſts, Surely this Iniquity ſhall not be purged from you till ye die, ſaith the* LORD GOD *of Hoſts. i. e.* GOD will not be ſoon or eaſily appeaſed for ſuch Sins; but will purſue thoſe who are guilty of them, with Vengeance all their Lives long.

WHAT ſort of Carriage and Behaviour the preſent Times require of us, I ſhall not pretend to determine; But I think I may venture to ſay, That this does not ſeem to be a Time wherein we may more ſafely give ourſelves up to Pleaſures, and more ſecurely neglect the Duties of Religion, than formerly.

BUT

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BUT be that as it will; full Draughts of ſenſual Pleaſures, and freely indulging the Body, do ill become this ſolemn Seaſon of Abſtinence and Self-denial.

THIS is a Seaſon of Recollection and Repentance, and is ſet apart by primitive Practice, for the more ſerious Performance of religious Duties, to call ourſelves to an account for all the Errors of our paſt Life, and exerciſe a deep and unfeigned Humiliation.

WE are all of us ſo immerſed in ſenſual Pleaſures, and taken up with the Vanities and Follies of this Life, that we ought to lay hold of all Opportunities to recall and reduce our ſtraggling Thoughts, and get ſuch a ſerious Frame and Compoſure of Spirit, as is neceſſary to make us mind the weighty Concerns of Eternity.

AND this is a fit Seaſon for this Work. Let us not therefore, inſtead of humbling our Souls with Faſting and Prayer, paſs theſe holy Days in Mirth and Pleaſure: But let us uſe ſuch Abſtinence in all our innocent Refreſhments and Recreations, that the Fleſh being ſubdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey GOD's holy Motions, in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs.

IT

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Eccl. vii. 2.

IT *is better*, at all Times, *to go to the Houſe of Mourning, than the Houſe of Feaſting*; becauſe this is what we muſt all come to, and therefore we ought always to lay it to Heart.

BUT it is certainly at this Time, *meet and right, ſo to do*: It is more becoming us now to reſort to the Temple than the Theatre, and not ſuffer thoſe Diverſions to intermingle with the ſerious Duties and Devotions of this holy Seaſon.

AND if we refuſe to refrain from theſe Things for a Time, for the great Ends and Purpoſes of Religion; the Reaſon is plainly this, that we *are Lovers of Pleaſures, more than Lovers of* GOD.

II. AND thus having laid down ſome few Rules for the Regulation of our Pleaſures;

I come now in the *Second* Place, to enforce the Practice of them, and to uſe ſome Arguments by way of Motives to induce you to this Moderation. And,

I. LET us conſider the great Meanneſs of ſenſual Pleaſures, how unbecoming they are the Dignity of a Rational Being.

THEY

THEY are an unfit Entertainment for Man; and do more properly belong to Beaſts, who have as quick a Taſte of them as we, and no Reliſh for any Thing higher or better. SERM. VIII.

BUT Man was made for nobler Ends and Purpoſes; for a Life of Sobriety and Virtue; And whenever he is overcome, and yields to ſenſual Pleaſure, he is aſhamed of himſelf, and is forced, for Modeſty Sake, to conceal and diſguiſe it, to ſeek Receſſes and the Dark, as being well aware that he condeſcends below himſelf, when he ſtoops to it: Which is a plain Acknowledgment, that the Pleaſures of the Body are beneath the Dignity of the Soul; and, when compared with that, contemptible, and to be rejected.

THE Mind of Man is more Noble and Excellent, than to take any true Satisfaction in theſe outward Things; and has larger Capacities than they can poſſibly fill.

IT is only intellectual Pleaſures, the Teſtimony of a good Conſcience, and the Satisfaction of having done ſome Good; a Senſe of GOD's Favour, and the Hopes of Eternal Life; which are the

SERM. VIII. the proper Repaſt of Man, and afford ſuch ſolid and laſting Comforts as far ſurpaſs all the Delights and Enjoyments of the moſt ſenſual Epicure. Which brings me to a

2. ARGUMENT for the Moderation of our Pleaſures; and that is, That they are empty and unſatisfactory, as well as mean and unbecoming.

WHAT *Fruit then had ye in thoſe Things, whereof ye are now aſhamed?* was St. *Paul*'s Expoſtulation with the *Romans*, *ch.* vi. 21. and may fitly be applied to the preſent Caſe.

A Voluptuous Life is altogether fruitleſs, and ſenſual Pleaſure is to be accounted nothing worth; becauſe when 'tis once paſt, it is as though it had never been; It is of the ſhorteſt Duration, and periſhes in the Enjoyment: And, though never ſo innocent, leaves no grateful Remembrance behind it; and when uſed to Exceſs, has always an ill Farewell, and ends in Remorſe and Repentance.

3. ANOTHER Conſideration which ſhould induce us to be moderate in our Pleaſures, is, the ill Influence which an immoderate Enjoyment of them will have

have upon our future State and Condi- SERM. tion. Our preſent Condition in this VIII. Life, if great Care be not taken, will very much diſcompoſe us for another.

WE are cloathed, or rather clogged, with dull and heavy Matter; for the corruptible Body preſſes down the Soul.

WE are ſurrounded with ſenſible Objects, which continually ſollicit us, and make very ſtrong and lively Impreſſions upon us: We live in a World where the Temptations are many and mighty, and the ill Examples of Men, like ourſelves, are apt to infect us.

SO that 'tis extream difficult to eſcape the Pollutions which are in the World through Luſt; but in our Paſſage we ſhall contract more or leſs Defilement.

HOWEVER while we continue in this Body, and converſe daily with the World and worldly Objects, we ſhall through long Cuſtom and Uſage gain a Liking and Affection for theſe ſenſible Things, which will greatly indiſpoſe us for the Buſineſs and Imployment of another World; the Rational Pleaſures, and Spiritual Enjoyments of Heaven.

'TIS therefore the great Buſineſs of

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a Chriſtian, not only to mortify and ſubdue all his ſinful Luſts and Appetites; but even to moderate his moſt innocent and lawful Pleaſures; to call off his Thoughts from this World, to ſeparate Soul and Body, and ſo to prepare for his approaching Diſſolution, by abſtracting his Mind from Senſe and ſenſible Things, and getting above the Body, and above the World.

AND for as much as we know that *Fleſh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven*, we muſt uſe ourſelves patiently to lack what That doth deſire, and by Virtue to forbear what by Nature we covet. And among other wiſe Reaſons which GOD had to make this World ſuch as it is, and to intermingle Pleaſure with Pain in all the Things that inviron and affect us, and to blend them together in almoſt all that our Thoughts and Senſes have to do with, this is one; that we finding Imperfection, Diſſatisfaction, and want of compleat Happineſs in all the Enjoyments which the Creature can afford us, might be led to ſeek it in the Enjoyment of Him, *with whom there is Fullneſs of Joy, and at whoſe Right Hand there are Pleaſures for evermore.*

PSALM

PSALM xxxviii. 18.

For I will declare mine Iniquity, I will be ſorry for my Sin.

Or, as it is in the Old Verſion:

I will confeſs my Wickedneſs, and be ſorry for my Sin.

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THE Seaſon which we are now entering upon, being ſet apart by Primitive Practice and Cuſtom for the more immediate Exerciſe of Meditation and Devotion, and all other Acts of a Religious and Spiritual Nature; and more

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especially for the strict Examination of our Lives and Actions, in order to a right Understanding of our Spiritual State and Condition, and exciting us to a sincere Repentance and Humiliation for our manifold Sins and Transgressions: A Discourse upon these Words of the Psalmist will not be improper, since he was himself an exemplary Pattern of those Duties we are now called upon to apply ourselves to, and has here recommended two very material and important Points to our Practice and Study, Confession of Sins, and Sorrow for them.

AND these two have a mutual Dependance upon one another; Confession of our Sins being a very proper Introduction to Sorrow for them, and Sorrow the natural Fruit of an humble and sincere Confession. For it is not likely that a Man should be sorry for that which he is not willing to confess himself guilty of; or confess that to be a Fault, which he is not at all sorry that he hath done.

AND therefore these two are very fitly joined together, and ought never to be separated. And it will at all Times become us, but more especially now,

now, to reſolve with the Pſalmiſt, *I will confeſs my Wickedneſs, I will be ſorry for my Sin.* SERM. IX.

AND that I may convince both you and myſelf of the Neceſſity of This, and direct us to a due Performance of it; I ſhall in the Firſt Place

I. BRIEFLY lay before you a general Repreſentation of the *Nature of Sin*, that we may ſee how juſt a Matter it is of *Sorrow* and *Confeſſion*.

II. I SHALL ſpeak diſtinctly to *each* of theſe *Duties*, and endeavour to explain the true Grounds and Reaſon of them, and ſhow our Obligation to them. Which when I have done, I ſhall in the

III. AND Laſt Place, cloſe all with a brief Application of the Whole.

I. I AM to lay before you a ſhort Repreſentation of the *Nature* of *Sin*; that we may ſee what it is which the Pſalmiſt here reſolves to confeſs and bewail, and what great Reaſon he had for this Reſolution.

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NOW *Sin*, the Apoſtle tells us, *is the Tranſgreſſion of the Law*, 1 John iii. 4. And another Apoſtle ſays, that *where there is no Law, there is no Tranſgreſſion*, Rom. iv. 15. But Man was never deſtitute of a Law, for the Government of his Life and Actions. He was at firſt created under a Law, nay, he was made a Law to himſelf, and had a Law written in his Heart, *his Conſcience alſo bearing witneſs, and his Thoughts the mean while accuſing or elſe excuſing one another*, Rom. ii. 15.

WHILE the other Parts of the Creation had Laws impoſed upon them whereby they were to act, and their Bounds ſet them which they could not paſs: Man who was a free Agent, and endued with a reaſonable Soul, had no Law given him but the Reaſon of his own Mind, which was ſufficient to direct him in his Duty. What other Creatures did by blind Inſtinct, external Force and Impulſe, over-ruling Neceſſity, or the like; Man was able to do upon nobler Principles; by Reaſon, and Judgment; Deliberation, and Choice.

AND while They kept their Station, and the Law which GOD had given them; Man ſhamefully fell, and tranſgreſſed the Law of his Creation. He departed from the right Way, and deſerted the Reaſon of his Mind; and by this Means weakened his Powers, and impaired his Faculties, and ſunk himſelf into a low and mean Eſtate beneath the Dignity of his Nature, deſerted the Rank in which he was placed, and the Station which he filled in the World. SERM. IX.

HERE then the Wickedneſs of Sin appears, in that it is the Tranſgreſſion of a Law which Nature itſelf lays us under, and our own Reaſon dictates to us: A Law which is born and bred with us, and is a Part of ourſelves: Which we cannot but own to be in all Reſpects holy, juſt, and good; ſuch as is moſt ſuitable and agreeable to us, and does beſt befit and become us.

ALL Sin and Iniquity is acting againſt our Knowledge, and doing That which is beneath us, and manifeſtly unworthy of us. 'Tis contradicting the Senſe of our own Minds, and that inward Light which GOD has given us. 'Tis offending againſt the cleareſt Reaſon and the

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fulleſt Conviction of our Judgment: And is what we could not but inwardly condemn ourſelves for, though we were ſure never to be condemned or called to an Account by any Foreign Power. 'Tis debaſing and degrading our Natures, and going againſt the plain Reaſon of Things: And as ſuch, cannot but be highly offenſive to GOD, who is the great Author of our Beings, who made us ſuch as we are, and endued us with theſe common Notices of Good and Evil, and put this eſſential Difference between the Natures of Things.

BUT if we conſider This Law as an expreſs Revelation of Almighty GOD; Sin will appear ſtill more exceeding ſinful, as it is the Tranſgreſſion of a Law which GOD Himſelf was the immediate Author of, and impoſed upon us by His Authority.

FOR when Man by tranſgreſſing the Law of his Nature and Creation, had obſcured his Reaſon, and impaired his Strength; GOD was graciouſly pleaſed to make a new Revelation of His Will: To revive, reinforce, and perfect the Law of Nature; to ſet Man's Duty before

before him in a new and a clearer Light, and lay him under freſh Obligations, and give him freſh Supplies of Strength to perform it. SERM. IX.

So that what before was the Law of Nature only, became now in a more ſtrict and proper Senſe the Law of GOD; but ſtill thus far agreeable to the Law of Nature, that it enjoined nothing but what Reaſon itſelf required of us, or at leaſt could not but cloſe in with, and approve.

NOW GOD, as we are His Creatures and the Work of His Hands, has an original Right to abſolute and unlimited Obedience. He may command us any Thing within our Power, and diſpoſe of us as He pleaſes: For 'tis certainly lawful for Him to do what He will with His own. And in this Senſe, Sin is an Act of the higheſt Injuſtice; as it is witholding from GOD, that Obedience which is juſtly due to Him.

IF we conſider farther, not only the Right, but the Power too which GOD has over us: That He has the ſole Diſpoſal of all Things in Heaven and Earth, and is the Great ARBITER of Human Affairs: That we and all our

SERM. IX. Deſigns and Undertakings are in His Hands, and lie at His Mercy: That whatever our Endeavours are, He can either help or hinder them: That He can bleſs or blaſt every Thing we put our Hand to: That He has the Iſſues of Life and Death in His Power, and moderates and diſpenſes the Rewards of Eternity; and can make us happy beyond our Hopes, or miſerable beyond our Fears;

THESE and ſuch like Reflexions, which are very natural, will convince us that Sin is the greateſt Boldneſs and Preſumption, as well as Injuſtice.

IF we go on to conſider not only what GOD can do, which indeed is paſt our finding out, but what He has actually done for us already; how He has hitherto employed His Power for our Good; we ſhall diſcover the baſeſt and blackeſt Ingratitude in Sin, and find it the moſt ſhameful and unworthy Return we can make to GOD for what He has done for us.

IT was His free and unmerited Goodneſs that firſt brought us into Being, and ſtill continues us in it. 'Twas He that created

created us out of nothing, and endued us with thoſe noble and excellent Faculties which ſet us ſo far above our Fellow Creatures. 'Twas He that taught us more than the Beaſts of the Earth, and made us wiſer than the Fowls of Heaven. And when we had by our Sin and Folly made ourſelves more wretched and miſerable than they; when we had forfeited that Happineſs for which we were created, and incurred the Sentence of Death: His Goodneſs exerted itſelf again, and found out a marvellous Way for our eſcape: He ſent His Son to redeem our Souls from Death, and put us into a Capacity of Eternal Life.

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In a word: 'tis He that has done every Thing for us, and to Him we owe all that we are, or have, or hope for; all the Good Things we enjoy in this Life, and the Expectations of a Better.

Now what horrid Baſeneſs, and monſtrous Ingratitude is it, to refuſe Him any Thing who has beſtowed ſo much upon us? To be diſobedient to Him, whom we are thus infinitely obliged to? To turn our Backs upon the great-

eſt

SERM. IX. eſt FRIEND that we have, and rebel againſt our Beſt and Onely Patron and Benefactor.

BUT the Sinfulneſs of Sin will appear ſtill greater, and even immeaſurably great; when we conſider that the Law which we thus tranſgreſs, is not a mere Arbitrary Impoſition, to ſhow the Power of Him that impoſed it. 'Tis not a Matter of an indifferent Nature, and of no other Force than as it is enjoined us: But 'tis in itſelf good, and good for us; and every Way ſuited to promote our Happineſs. 'Tis not a vain Thing, for 'tis our Life; the Happineſs both of this Life and the next, depends upon it.

AND thus much we might collect from what has been already ſaid. For ſince every Thing that GOD has done for us, has been for our Good; we may reaſonably infer, that He would not command us to do any Thing but what tends to the ſame End. But 'tis farther manifeſt, from the Nature of the Things enjoined us; that the End of the Commandment was Charity, a Love to us, and a Regard of our Welfare.

FOR

For our Righteouſneſs extendeth not to God, nor can our Goodneſs reach Him, or any Way affect His Happineſs. What can our Temperance, Chaſtity, Humility and Contentedneſs, Juſtice and Mercy, avail the Almighty, who is of Infinite Fulneſs, incapable of Acceſſion or Diminution? SERM. IX.

These Things may, and moſt certainly do benefit ourſelves, and make for our own Intereſt; but nothing accrues from them to God. When they are done out of a Senſe of our Duty to Him, and becauſe He commands them; they are very proper Expreſſions of our Love and Obedience; But all the Advantage of them redounds to ourſelves, and returns into our own Boſom.

And this is undeniably true of all thoſe Duties which God has enjoyned us; They are all of them ſuch as are profitable and beneficial to us; and we have all imaginable Reaſon to think that God had our Intereſt in View, when He required them of us.

So that Sin, as it is the Tranſgreſſion of a Law made for our own Good, is at once Ingratitude to God, and Injuſtice and Cruelty

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Cruelty to ourſelves. It argues Malice and Hatred to ourſelves; and is the greateſt Obſtinacy and Perverſeneſs in the World. When we ſin and tranſgreſs GOD's Laws, we ruin ourſelves; and not only offend GOD, but ſin againſt our own Souls.

THESE are ſome of thoſe Conſiderations which may enable us in ſome Meaſure to judge of the deadly Nature of Sin, and to let us ſee what it is which fills up the Meaſure of its Malignity, and renders it the Hatred of GOD and Good Men.

'TIS contrary to the Nature of Man, and the Reaſon of Things, and the ſettled Order, Conſtitution, and Government of the World. 'Tis the higheſt Affront and Contempt of GOD; and the greateſt Blemiſh and Stain upon ourſelves. 'Tis repugnant to our Duty, and our Intereſt; and not only unjuſt and ungrateful to GOD, but extreamly injurious and prejudicial to ourſelves.

'TIS an Evil too deep to be fully ſearched out; 'tis made up of deadly Poyſon, and compounded of the worſt Ingredients, and attended with the moſt fatal Effects.

AND

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And whereas other Evils often come upon us unawares, and notwithstanding all the Care and Diligence we can use to prevent them; This is an Evil of our own making, which we seek and choose ourselves, and pull down upon our own Heads. And while the most and worst of any other Calamity that can befall us, is but the Destruction of this Body which in itself is mortal, and the Ruin of our Temporal Interest; this will ruin our Eternal Interest, and destroy both Body and Soul in Hell.

And certainly whoever duly weighs and considers these Things, will find that here is enough to confess and bewail; abundant Matter for Sorrow and Humiliation; and that it is very meet to say and resolve with the *Psalmist*, *I will confess my Wickedness, I will be sorry for my Sin.* But this falls under my

II. Second Head of Discourse; wherein I am to speak distinctly to *each* of these *Duties*, and explain the true Grounds and Reason of them, and show our Obligation to them. And

I. Of *Confession*, *i. e.* Confession to God: For as to Confession

to

SERM. IX. to a Prieſt, the Scripture is wholly ſilent.

AND here I need not tell you, that this Confeſſion is not to inform GOD of our Sins, who knows them more and better than we do ourſelves.

THERE is a Pen of a ready Writer, continually noting down with indelible Characters all our Sins and Failings, and keeping an exact Regiſter of our Actions, and in his Book are all our Tranſgreſſions written. He knows our Thoughts afar off, and diſcerns our Sins in their firſt Motion and Intention. And this Conſideration ought to move us to the greateſt Sincerity in our Confeſſions to GOD, to lay our Caſe open freely and fully without any Reſerve, not to keep back any Part of our Sin, or conceal any Circumſtance belonging to it; ſince 'tis both vain and impious to endeavour to hide any thing from Him, *to whom all Hearts are open, and from whom no Secrets are*, or can be, *hid*.

BUT though this Confeſſion is not neceſſary to inform GOD; yet it is neceſſary upon many other Accounts, and is what GOD Himſelf has required of us, and made an expreſs Condition of our Pardon.

WHEN-

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WHENEVER we have offended, 'tis the leaſt and loweſt Thing we can do, to acknowledge our Faults; for he does ill deſerve a Pardon, who will not own he wants it.

THIS Confeſſion is neceſſary in Caſe of Offences againſt Men, and where we are able to make Reſtitution: But 'tis much more ſo in Offences againſt GOD, where we are unable to repair what we have done amiſs, and make any Satisfaction. There certainly it well becomes us to confeſs our Sin, to acknowledge that we have done wickedly, and highly provoked and affronted the MAJESTY of Heaven.

AND this is one good Step towards making ſuch Reparation for our Fault, as we are capable of, and GOD will accept at our Hands. For as by Sin we have diſhonoured GOD, diſowned his Authority, and caſt the utmoſt Contempt upon his Laws; ſo by confeſſing our Sins, we take Shame to ourſelves, and give Glory to GOD: We accuſe and condemn ourſelves of Iniquity and Folly, and juſtify the Wiſdom of GOD: We acknowledge that He has done righteouſly, but we have done wickedly. We

own

SERM. IX. own that his Commands were holy, juſt and good; and that we ourſelves were guilty of the higheſt Impiety, Injuſtice, and Ingratitude in tranſgreſſing them.

BY this Means we do in ſome Meaſure recal what is paſt, and virtually revoke what we have done. This is an Act of Submiſſion to GOD's Authority over us, and expreſſes our Deſire of returning again to our Duty and Obedience. Hereby we declare that we have done amiſs, that our former Courſe of Life was utterly Wrong; that we are miſerable Perſons, and had erred from the right Way, and were altogether out of the Methods of Heaven and Happineſs; and that, if GOD ſhould leave us, as He juſtly might, to reap the Wages of Sin, and be filled with the Fruit of our Doings, we were undone for ever, and ruined to all Eternity.

IN theſe, and many other Reſpects, Confeſſion of Sins is neceſſary: For though GOD needs it not, yet he does expect it from us, that He may be juſtified and glorified in that Sentence of Condemnation which He has paſſed upon Sin and Sinners.

AND upon this Account, 'tis our Duty to confeſs our Sins to GOD, and acknowledge our Obligation to Puniſhment: To condemn our own Actions, and convict ourſelves of Sin: To own that we are guilty Criminals, and ſtand at GOD's Mercy, for having done thoſe Things for which we *affirm with our own Mouths the Curſe of* GOD *to be due.* SERM. IX.

AND here it will not be amiſs, briefly to remove a weak Prejudice (to give it no worſe Name) which ſome have taken againſt Part of the Office for the Firſt Day of *Lent*; That Part, I mean, *which contains general Sentences out of Scripture of* GOD's *Curſes upon impenitent Sinners, and to which we are enjoined to anſwer, Amen.*

THIS has been traduced by ſome, and derided by others, as a wicked and fooliſh Thing; as if it were curſing ourſelves, and wiſhing our own Damnation.

BUT the Weakneſs of this Objection will appear from the Original Inſtitution of this Part of our Office, and the true Meaning and Deſign of it.

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As to the Original of it; 'tis no leſs than a poſitive Inſtitution of GOD, who twice enjoined it by his Servant *Moſes*, Deut. xi. 29. and more fully in *Chap.* 27. And in Obedience to GOD's Command, it was religiouſly obſerved, and conſtantly complied with by His People. So that whatever the Meaning of it be, we ſhould be very cautious of objecting Folly and Wickedneſs againſt any Thing that is of Divine Inſtitution; for this is no better than Blaſphemy, and charging GOD fooliſhly. But the Truth of it is; the Meaning and Deſign of this Part of our Office is as much miſtaken, as the Original of it is overlooked. For by ſaying *Amen* to thoſe Curſes which GOD has denounced againſt the Sins which are there enumerated, we do not pray for a Curſe upon ourſelves, or wiſh our own Damnation as the Objection ſuppoſes. For the Word *Amen* is not properly an Adverb of Wiſhing, though it is ſometimes ſo uſed; but of Affirming, and Aſſenting to the Truth of what is ſaid. For it is derived from a *Hebrew* Root, which ſignifies Truth, or Certainty, and is frequently ſo rendered.

So

So that by repeating this Word after every Sentence, we do not curse ourselves, but only testify our Belief that God will curse those who continue in such Sins. We do no more than set to our Seal that God is true, and His Threatnings to be feared; and that He will certainly inflict severe Punishments on all those who have been guilty of such Sins, and have not repented of them, and forsaken them. The Curse threatned against the Sin, is read to us out of the Law of God: And we only declare our Belief, that God is faithful who has threatned; and that the Curse will certainly light on those, upon whom it is denounced. SERM. IX.

And how does this bring any Curse upon us? If we be penitent, we avoid the Curse; if we be impenitent, the Foundation of God standeth sure; and the Curse, whether we believe it or no, will light upon our own Heads. For all that we say, amounts to no more than this, That he whom God blesseth, is blessed; and he whom God curseth, is cursed.

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BUT then, as This ſets before us our Danger, ſo it is a proper Means to excite our Care and Induſtry, to prevent and avoid it.

AND the Thing is in itſelf very fit and becoming us, and a proper Application to GOD for Pardon. If we thus accuſe, judge, and condemn ourſelves, we ſhall not be judged of the LORD, nor condemned with the World, but find Mercy from Him in that Day, and be ſaved from the Wrath to come.

AND as Confeſſion of our Sins to GOD, is, in the Nature and Reaſon of the Thing, thus well-grounded; ſo is it abſolutely neceſſary as it is expreſsly commanded by GOD, and made a Condition of our Pardon.

THUS in the Old Law, *Numb.* v. 6, 7. *When a Man or Woman ſhall commit any Sin; then they ſhall confeſs their Sins which they have done.*

THUS *Elihu* tells *Job*, Ch. xxxiii. 27, 28. *If any ſay I have ſinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his Soul from going into the Pit, and his Life ſhall ſee the Light.* And *Solomon* tells us, *That he who covereth his Sins, ſhall not proſper;*

proſper: But whoſo confeſſeth, and forſaketh them, ſhall have Mercy. And St. *John* has aſſured us, That *if we confeſs our Sins,* GOD *is faithful and juſt to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanſe us from all Unrighteouſneſs.* SERM. IX.

AND to this Precept, the Practice of all devout Penitents has ever been conformable; Inſtances of which are ſo many, and ſo well known, that I need not produce them.

ALL that I ſhall farther add under this Head is, that the more particular we are in this Confeſſion, the more acceptable is it to GOD, and the more beneficial to ourſelves. And therefore we ſhould often allot ſome Part of our Time for this Work; and more eſpecially at the Return of this ſolemn Seaſon, we ſhould ſet ourſelves ſeriouſly to recollect all our paſt Sins and Follies, together with every Circumſtance which will heighten and aggravate their Guilt, and render them odious and offenſive to us.

AND though this will be but an unpleaſant Task for the preſent, yet we ſhall ſoon reap the Fruits of it. For when we have thus made up our ſad

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Account, and find it ſwelled to ſuch an Height, and that it contains ſo many grievous Particulars; we ſhall be more eaſily worked upon, and brought to a hearty Sorrow and Concern. When we have thus *confeſſed our Wickedneſs*, we cannot chooſe *but be ſorry for our Sin*. Which is the Second Particular I am to ſpeak to.

2. NOW *Sorrow*, in general, is an Uneaſineſs, or Trouble of Mind, ariſing from the Apprehenſion of the Loſs of ſome Good, which we might have enjoyed; or the ſuffering ſome Evil, which we might have avoided.

OF this Nature is that Sorrow which accompanies the Miſeries and Misfortunes of this preſent Time, and the Croſſes and Afflictions which befall us in this World. And there is Room and Reaſon enough to be ſorry for our Sins, upon this Account; becauſe the Good Things which they will deprive us of, and the Evils they will bring upon us, are infinitely greater and more conſiderable, than any or all the Things of this World.

THERE is no Motive to Sorrow, or Ground of Grief, which we can poſſi-

bly

bly conceive, but the Conſideration of our Sins will furniſh us with it. SERM. IX.

ARE we grieved becauſe we have miſſed of ſome very great and beneficial Place or Purchaſe, which we might eaſily have obtained; and have not uſed thoſe Advantages which were put into our Hands, nor improved our Fortunes as we had it in our Power? Are we concerned that we have run ourſelves into inextricable Difficulties and Inconveniencies, and have made ourſelves miſerable when we might have been happy? All this is the Sinner's Caſe; he has ſlipped ineſtimable Opportunities, and neglected thoſe Advantages which were put into his Hands. And when he might have made himſelf for ever, by purchaſing the Favour of GOD, and a Bleſſed Immortality; he has forfeited Heaven and Happineſs, and is become a Child of Wrath, and the Son of Perdition.

ARE we concerned at any imprudent Step we have taken, or any Folly we have been guilty of, where, beſides the Damage we ſhall ſuſtain, our Wiſdom and Prudence will be called in queſtion, and we have given juſt Oc-

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caſion for Cenſure and Reproach? Sin is the greateſt Folly and Imprudence we can be guilty of, and argues an utter Want of Wiſdom and Diſcretion. 'Tis what we cannot but bluſh for now, and ſhall hereafter be confounded at the Thoughts of it, before Men and Angels, and inherit everlaſting Shame and Contempt.

ARE we ſorry that we have offended the beſt and greateſt Friend we have; that we have loſt the Favour, and incurred the Diſpleaſure of him, upon whom we entirely depended, and in whoſe Power it is to raiſe or ruin us as he pleaſes? We cannot but be extreamly ſorry that we have offended GOD, whoſe Favour is better than Life itſelf, and whoſe Frowns are more terrible than Death.

IT were eaſy to enlarge upon this Head; to go over all the juſt Occaſions of Grief, and conſider every Thing that is apt to excite this Paſſion in us, and affect us with Sorrow; and to ſhow how they all meet and concentre in Sin.

BUT in this Senſe, Sorrow for Sin, is natural and neceſſary: 'Tis what we

cannot

cannot reſtrain and ſuppreſs, if ever we give ourſelves the Liberty to reflect upon our Condition. We cannot help being ſorry and grieved at the Proſpect of our own Miſery and Ruin; at the Evils which we actually feel, or have great Reaſon to fear. All this flows immediately from that Principle of Self-Preſervation which is planted in us; that Love which we bear to ourſelves, and the Deſire we have of our own Happineſs. SERM. IX.

So that if this was all that the Pſalmiſt meant, he needed not to have reſolved with himſelf to be ſorry for his Sin; becauſe this would have been to have reſolved to do that, which it would have been very difficult, if not impoſſible to have forborn. In this Senſe, the worſt and moſt wicked Men do, at ſome certain Seaſons, grieve and ſorrow for their Sins, though they never entertained any ſerious Purpoſe of forſaking them: And thus even the damned in Hell lament and bewail their Sins, and ſadly repent to all Eternity.

But This, though it be not a true penitential Sorrow, yet it may by a due

Improve-

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Improvement and diſcreet Management, he made an Inſtrument of it, and a good Introduction to it; as *the Fear of the Lord, is the Beginning of Wiſdom.*

A SENSE of Danger, and an Apprehenſion of Sufferings, are uſually the firſt Motives which faſten themſelves upon us, and induce us to leave thoſe Courſes which thus expoſe us. And therefore the Scripture itſelf frequently makes Application to our Fears, and urges us to leave our Sins, by ſetting before us the Wrath of GOD revealed from Heaven againſt all Ungodlineſs and Unrighteouſneſs of Men. So that the Sorrow which ariſes from a Senſe of our own Miſery and Danger, and which is in itſelf natural and unavoidable and involuntary, may be a voluntary Motive to forſake our Sins. Only Care muſt be taken that our Sorrow ſtops not here; but be carried on, and ſettled upon a higher Ground, and more noble Foundation.

FOR if the Apprehenſion of Danger be the only Ground of our Sorrow, we cannot be thought to be ſo much ſorry for our Sin, as for our Suffering. This Sor-

row

row may be in us without making any Alteration in our Opinion concerning Sin, without any real Change in our Minds, in which the Nature of Repentance conſiſts; for we may ſtill like and love our Sin, and wiſh we might lawfully and could ſafely indulge ourſelves in it. SERM. IX.

BUT yet if we leave our Sins upon this Sorrow, we may be led by Degrees to that *godly Sorrow which worketh Repentance unto Salvation, not to be repented of*; that is, ſuch a Sorrow as will produce an unalterable Change in our Minds, a firm Purpoſe, and thorough Reſolution to forſake our Sins; which as we ſhall have no Cauſe to repent and be troubled at, ſo no Reaſon ever to alter or lay down. 2 Cor. vii. 10.

AND this Sorrow muſt proceed from a higher Principle than that of Fear; it muſt be grounded upon a true Love of GOD, and a real Hatred of Sin: It muſt be ſeated in the Underſtanding more than in the Paſſions and Affections; and go upon the Motives of Honour, Ingenuity, Gratitude, and the like.

AND if we reflect upon what has been already ſaid, concerning the Nature

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ture of Sin; we ſhall find Reaſon enough to be ſorry for it upon ſuch Motives as theſe; and to hate it for its own Sake, though there were no Evil or Danger to be apprehended from it. For 'tis the baſeſt and moſt unſuitable Return we can make to GOD, for what He has done for us; and the vileſt Abuſe and Proſtitution of ourſelves.

'TIS ſo far beneath us, and below the Dignity of our Nature, and unworthy of a Man; that out of mere Greatneſs and Generoſity of Mind, and a due Senſe of our native Worth and Excellency; one would abhor all baſe and wicked Actions, and be heartily grieved and ſorry, inwardly vexed and afflicted, whenever we have been ſuch Fools, acted ſo unlike ourſelves, and got ſuch a Stain and Blemiſh upon us.

AND theſe are Principles which we often go upon in other Caſes. If we have any Spirit of Ingenuity and Gratitude, we cannot chooſe but be heartily ſorry, and truly grieved, when we have offended and diſobliged one who has been our Friend and Benefactor, though we have no future Expectations from him, nor any Reaſon to fear he can hurt

us,

us. And when we have done any thing that is baſe and unbecoming us, tho' we are ſure never to ſuffer for it, yet if we have any Spark of Honour, any true Greatneſs of Mind, we cannot help being really concerned for what we have done, and ſhall wiſh with all our Hearts that we had been wiſer.

THIS is the Ground of a true penitential Sorrow. And the more we are offended at our Sins in this Senſe, the leſs they are ours: The more they are thus a Burden to us, the leſs they are our Guilt.

SUCH a Sorrow as This, is the moſt ample Satisfaction we can make to GOD, and the beſt Security we can have of ourſelves. When we grieve, not only, nor ſo much for our Puniſhment, as our Sin; not only for what we ſhall ſuffer, but chiefly for what we have done; and would rather chooſe to die than do the like again: We are then in a right Spirit, in a truly good Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind, and ſuch a State as comes the neareſt to Innocence itſelf. Such a Senſe of our Sins, and ſuch a Sorrow for them as this, is the trueſt Ground of Comfort and Satisfaction; This will bring Peace and

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and Quiet to our Minds, and give us as good an Assurance of Pardon, as the Testimony of an Angel from Heaven.

BUT I would not be mistaken, as if I would go about to discourage you from that Sorrow which goes upon lower Motives, upon the Sense of Danger, and the Fear of Punishment: For this too, as has been said, is of excellent Use in its proper Time and Place. It may, if it makes us leave off our Sins, be the good Beginning of a godly Sorrow, and the happy Instrument of it. But then it must be improved and carried on to a true godly Sorrow, if we will reap any Comfort, or have any Safety, in it.

FOR bare Fear is no firm and lasting Principle of Duty: And he that is under no other Restraint from Sin, will break loose whenever his Fears are stifled or vanquished, and return again to his former Courses.

AND this is what we have frequent Instances of, in Men who, to all outward Appearance, have expressed the greatest Sorrow and Concern for their Sins in Times of Afflictions and Distress, upon the Bed of Sickness, and at the approach of Death: And yet when the Danger

was

was paſt, their Fears have vaniſhed; and their Sorrow, the Off-ſpring of theſe Fears, has proved *like a Morning Cloud*; and their Tears, *as the early Dew which goeth away*, Hoſ. vi. 4. SERM. IX.

AND therefore in order to make our Sorrow ſincere and truly penitential, 'tis neceſſary that our Fear ſhould be made perfect by Love; nay, *perfect Love will caſt out Fear*, as the Apoſtle tells us, 1 *John* iv. 18. and will affect us with ſuch an hearty Sorrow for having offended One who has loved us ſo much, and whom we are under ſo many Obligations to love; as will lay the firmeſt Foundation, and prove the beſt Security of our future Obedience.

THIS is indeed the higheſt Pitch of a true penitential Sorrow, and therefore we muſt not think that we can immediately attain to it. It muſt be worked in us by Degrees, by proper Conſiderations, and Reflections upon the Nature of Sin, ſuch as I have already ſuggeſted to you.

ALL that is neceſſary to be further added upon this Head, is; that in moſt Caſes, and in moſt Perſons, Sorrow for Sin will be attended with ſome Degrees of

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of Fear, even to the End of their Lives; and therefore we are enjoyned to *work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling*. And the Reaſon is very plain; becauſe the Danger we are in, which is the natural and neceſſary Ground of this Fear, is never over till our Death. For beſides that we are daily expoſed to Temptations, and liable to relapſe and fall again into Sin; few or none arrive at *a full and abſolute Aſſurance* of Pardon and Forgiveneſs, till they find it ſealed in Heaven, when they *go hence and are no more ſeen*.

Phil. ii. 12.

BUT the firmeſt Ground of Hope and Comfort we can poſſibly have, is to take all the proper Methods we can, to ſorrow for our Sins after this godly Sort; and in the whole Progreſs of this Work, to let our Love prevail, and have the Upper-Hand of our Fears. By this Means our Fears will leſſen, as our Love encreaſes; and our Path will be as *a ſhining Light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect Day*.

Proy. iv. 18.

BUT if inſtead of this, our Fear is the prevailing Ingredient in our Sorrow; and our Love to GOD, and Hatred of Sin, has little or no Share in it:

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I cannot ſee what Aſſurance we can have that our Repentance is real and ſincere, when we come to die; or why our Fear may not then prove as falſe and deceitful a Foundation to build upon, as we had often found it in our Lives. And then we have too much Reaſon to add Fear unto Fear; to be afraid that our Fear will end in Sorrow; and to have the dreadful Expectation that thoſe Things which we feared, will fall moſt heavily upon us.

AND thus I have explained the Nature and Grounds of theſe two Duties; Confeſſion of our Sins, and Sorrow for them; and ſhowed our Obligations to them.

III. ALL that remains, is briefly to apply what has been ſaid, and ſo conclude.

WE have ſeen how great an Evil Sin is, and how well Confeſſion and Sorrow become a penitent State, and how neceſſary they are in order to our Pardon. What then ſhould hinder us from ſetting ſeriouſly about this Work, and more particularly at this Seaſon, when we pretend both to GOD and

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Man to employ our Time in theſe Exerciſes? And if we would but make good theſe Pretenſions, and practice what we profeſs; it would have a good Influence upon our future Carriage and Behaviour.

INDEED there is no Time of our Lives, which ought to be wholly exempt from theſe ſeverer Duties. As in many Things we daily offend, and ſtand in Need of Mercy; ſo, in order to obtain it, we ought daily to confeſs our Sins, and be ſorry for them.

BUT they who are Strangers to theſe Duties at other Times, and never think of them but at the Return of certain Periods, when the Orders of the Church require them, or their Superiors enjoin them; are likely to perform them in a very ſlight and ſuperficial Manner. Their Sorrow and Humiliation will have more of the Theatre in it than the Temple; and conſiſt rather in outward Pomp and Show, than any inward Grief, and real Concern for their Sins.

WHEREAS if theſe Duties were our conſtant and daily Practice; beſides many

many other Benefits which I have not now Time to mention, they would become habitual to us, and be fixed upon a true Principle. And then any publick and ſolemn Time of Devotion and Humiliation, would bring them forth in ſuch a manner that they would have a due Effect upon us. SERM. IX.

WE ſhould then not only confeſs our Sins, but forſake them; without which, GOD may make our Confeſſion an Article againſt us, and condemn us out of our own Mouths. We ſhould then not only be ſorrowful for the Danger we are in, but for the Sins which brought us into this Danger; without which our Sorrow may ſwallow us up, and prove like the Sorrow of the World which worketh Death.

IN a word; by attending diligently upon theſe and ſuch like Duties, performing them not out of mere Form and Cuſtom, but out of a true Ground, and a right Principle; we ſhall reſcue ourſelves from the Power of Sin here, and the Puniſhment of it hereafter. If we thus ſow in Tears, we ſhall reap in Joy; and by giving Way to a

SERM. IX. timely and ſincere Sorrow now, we may prevent that diſmal Doom of Weeping and Wailing for ever.

I HAVE but one Thing more to add; Which is, that it has been uſual to join to the Exerciſes and Devotions of this ſolemn Seaſon, Alms and Acts of Charity and Compaſſion to the Poor. And whoever conſiders the many Precepts whereby this Duty is preſſed upon us in Holy Scripture, and the Promiſes both temporal and eternal which are there made to it; of what Force and Efficacy 'tis repreſented to be towards procuring GOD's Mercy, and the Pardon of our Sins; cannot but think it a very fit and proper Companion for this Confeſſion and Sorrow; and will eaſily be perſuaded to follow *Daniel*'s Counſel, to *break off his Sins by Righteouſneſs, and his Iniquities by ſhewing Mercy to the Poor.*

AND if, during this Seaſon, we retrench ſomething from our uſual Refreſhments and Recreations, which highly becomes a Time of Humiliation and Repentance, and is very uſeful and helpful in our Spiritual Concerns; I ſay,

ſay, if at this Time we deny ourſelves ſome Things which at other Times we think fit to have; this at leaſt ſhould now be beſtowed upon Acts of Charity, and added to our uſual Bounty. And there is no Act of Charity greater or more beneficial, than the Education of poor and helpleſs Children. SERM. IX.

BUT this is a Subject which you have been ſo often accuſtomed to, that it would be a Reproach to your Underſtandings, and a Reflexion upon your Memories, if I ſhould now take up the Time in enlarging upon it. I ſhall therefore entreat you not to be weary of Well-doing, but to continue this uſeful Work, this Labour of Love, and to abound in it ſtill more and more. By this Means our Abſtinence and Self-denial will ſtand clear of all Imputations of Covetouſneſs or Frugality, and will be truly Religious both in their Ends and their Uſes. Our Prayers and our Alms thus joined together, will come up as a Memorial before GOD, and will not fail to bring down a Bleſſing upon us. They will be our Safety

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SERM. IX. and Defence againſt the Evils and Miſeries of this Temporal Life, and enable us to lay up in Store for *ourſelves a good Foundation for the Time to come, that we may attain unto Life Eternal.*

Which GOD *grant*, &c.

ECCLES.

ECCLES. vii. 16.

Be not righteous over much, neither make thyſelf over wiſe: Why ſhouldſt thou deſtroy thyſelf?

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RELIGION lies between the two Extreams of Atheiſm and Superſtition. 'Tis not eaſy to determine which of theſe is moſt remote from true Religion, or moſt deſtructive of it. Atheiſm bids Defiance to every Thing that is ſacred, and caſts off all Religion and Conſcience: Superſtition places Religion in Matters which do not belong to it, and makes a Conſcience of Indifferent Things. The one

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takes an unlawful Liberty, and the other lays an unreaſonable Reſtraint. Superſtition runs as far beyond the true Bounds, as the other comes ſhort; and is as much a vicious Exceſs, as Atheiſm is a Defect in the Belief and Practice of true Religion.

AND though Superſtition may be the ſafeſt Extream, and, as we uſually ſay, an Error on the Right Hand; yet there is no Occaſion to err on either Hand; and but little Excuſe to be made for it, in ſo plain a Matter as Religion is. Yet notwithſtanding this, there is ſcarce any Thing wherein Men are ſo willing to be deceived, and to run into Extreams, and in ſome Senſe to do more and to take greater Pains than they need. By which Means they deſtroy the Peace and Quiet of their own Minds, ruin both themſelves and the Cauſe they are engaged in.

'TIS therefore with great Reaſon that the Wiſe Man gives us this Caution. *Be not righteous over much, neither make thyſelf over wiſe: Why ſhouldſt thou deſtroy thyſelf?*

I KNOW there are other Senſes of which theſe Words are capable, but the beſt

beſt Expoſitors give them this Senſe among others; and ſuppoſe the Wiſe Man here to caution us againſt being more ſtrict and rigorous than GOD requires, either by laying thoſe Yokes and Burthens upon ourſelves or others which GOD has not impoſed, or condemning thoſe Things as ſinful which He hath not forbidden. Which is really Superſtition; but is here called Righteouſneſs abuſively, becauſe it is ſo in Appearance, and perhaps in the Opinion of thoſe who practice it; and therefore he gives them the Name, but, by adding over much, denies them the Thing; for true Piety and Virtue can never be carried too far. No Man can be too holy or too good, or practice any Virtue in too great a Degree, provided his Zeal be accompanied with Knowledge and Diſcretion; But if he wants theſe, his Religion will ſoon degenerate into Folly and Superſtition.

SERM. X.

IN diſcourſing upon this Subject, I will

I. ENQUIRE into the Nature of Superſtition.

II. LAY

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II. LAY before you the ill Effects and Influence of it.

III. PRESCRIBE ſome Rules for the Prevention or Cure of ſo great an Evil.

I. OF the *Nature* of *Superſtition*. The Word, according to its primary Signification, both in the *Greek* and *Latin*, denotes the Worſhip of Souls departed; in which Senſe it does not much differ from Idolatry: At leaſt it is one Sort or Species of it.

FROM this particular Inſtance of falſe Worſhip, the Word has been extended to any Error or Miſtake in Religion; to Any falſe Belief, or undue Practice in the Worſhip of GOD; and according to the Modern Uſe of it, which is always the Standard of the preſent Meaning of Words, it generally imports a vicious Exceſs, multiplying the Objects of our Faith and Practice, miſtaking or exceeding the true Bounds of Piety and Devotion: Or, in the Words of the Wiſe Man, being *over much righteous, and over wiſe,*

wiſe, i. e. wiſe above what is written, and righteous beyond what is commanded or required of us. SERM. X.

IT ariſes from Miſapprehenſions and wrong Notions of the Divine Nature and Attributes. For Mens Religion and Worſhip of GOD, will always be formed and faſhioned according to their Conceptions of Him. If theſe be right, and ſuch as are worthy of GOD; their Religion will alſo be right or true, and their Worſhip ſuch as is fit to be offered to the Great MAJESTY of Heaven and Earth. If theſe be wrong, their Religion will be anſwerably falſe and erroneous; and their Worſhip abſurd and ridiculous, and ſuch as will rather provoke and affront, than pleaſe and reconcile ſuch a Pure and Spiritual Being as GOD is.

NOW as Mens Religion and Worſhip of GOD are framed according to their Notions and Conceptions of Him; ſo the Notions and Conceptions which Men have of GOD, are too often taken from themſelves. Selfiſh and narrow-minded Men make themſelves the Rule and Meaſure of Perfection in other Things. Hence they are apt to think that GOD is altogether

SERM. X. gether ſuch an one as themſelves; to conceive of Him according to their own Tempers and Inclinations, and to cloath the DEITY in their own Dreſs, and with what they moſt delight in.

Men of ill Natures and little Minds, whoſe Thoughts run upon ſmall and low Matters, and who lay greater Streſs upon outward Ceremonies and Circumſtantials, than upon real Worth and ſubſtantial Goodneſs; who are apt to be provoked to Anger and Paſſion upon the Omiſſion of a Point of mere Form and Ceremony, and to be as eaſily pacified again by flattering Words and formal Services; are apt to conceive thus of GOD, and to repreſent Him as auſtere and rigorous, quickly provoked by every little Miſtake or Over-ſight, and as ſoon appeaſed again by any ſlight ſuperficial Performances.

AGAIN, Men of proud Spirits and arbitrary Principles, who love to be believed in every Thing they ſay, and obeyed in every Thing they command, without or againſt Reaſon; imagine the ſame Thing of GOD, that He is arbitrary and imperious, that He lays his Commands and Injunctions upon us for no other

other End, but to ſhow his Power and Authority over us; and exacts the Belief of Things contrary to Reaſon. SERM. X.

IN like manner, the Cruel and Revengeful, who think it the greateſt Privilege to have others in Subjection, and take the greateſt Pleaſure in Vexing and Tormenting thoſe who are ſo; fancy that GOD has the ſame End in his Government of the World; that He delights in the Miſery of his Creatures, that He will be glorified in the Deſtruction of Mankind, and has doomed them to eternal Damnation.

THESE and ſuch-like Notions of GOD, repreſent Him as a frightful and hurtful BEING, as an Enemy to Mankind, One that bears them Ill-will, and has Thoughts of Evil towards them. And this naturally produces in Mens Minds an endleſs Dread, and perpetual Fear of Him; And this Fear puts them upon inventing various Methods of Reconciling GOD, upon making infinite Trials to pleaſe Him, upon believing and doing many Things which are not required or revealed, upon being *Righteous over much, and* making themſelves over wiſe, wherein Superſtition conſiſts.

THUS

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THUS far therefore Superſtition ariſes from Ignorance of GOD, from falſe Notions of his Nature and Attributes, particularly His Goodneſs.

BUT there is another Cauſe of Superſtition beſides Ignorance, which muſt not be diſſembled, becauſe in an Age of ſo much Light and Knowledge, it prevails much more; and that is, Wickedneſs.

MEN that allow themſelves in any Vice or Wickedneſs, which they are reſolved not to part with, muſt, if poſſible, reconcile their Hopes of Happineſs in another World, with a Liberty of Living as they liſt in this. Hence it is that they had rather Religion ſhould be any Thing than what it really is; and chooſe to go to Heaven any other Way than that which alone can bring them thither, ſubduing their Luſts and Vices, being truly Good and Virtuous, and fit for Heaven.

THIS is a fruitful Spring of Superſtition, and the Occaſion of all thoſe Follies and Abſurdities, thoſe ſenſeleſs and ridiculous Obſervances, with which the Religion of ſo many abounds, and whereby they impoſe upon themſelves, and fancy

ſancy they ſhall pleaſe GOD as much as they pleaſe themſelves. SERM. X.

SOMETHING they know muſt be done: And to ſpeak the Truth, they are willing to do a great deal, to be *Righteous over-much*, to perform ſuch Things as make much Noiſe and Show, and put them to great Pain and Coſt; but they are not willing to do the *one Thing needful*, to forſake their Sins, to purify their Hearts, to acquire a good Mind, and to lead a good Life, wherein all true Religion conſiſts.

ANY Thing beſides This, they are willing to do; and chooſe differently according to their different Humours and Fancies; whereby true Religion, which is one uniform Thing, the ſame in all Ages and Nations of the World, has appeared under ſo many Shapes and Forms, that if we had no other Rule to go by than the Practice of Men, we ſhould be at a Loſs to know what it is, and wherein it conſiſts. But this brings me to the

II. THING propoſed, which was, To lay before you the *ill Influence* and *Effects* of Superſtition.

AND

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AND the Miſchiefs of it are very great, both in the Civil and Religious Life.

As to the Civil Life; wherever that wrong over timerous Notion of the DEITY prevails, wherein Superſtition conſiſts; it deſtroys the Peace and Tranquillity of our Minds, and deprives us of the Comfort and Enjoyment of our Lives, and of every Thing that we have.

THIS is moſt evident from the dark Ages of Heatheniſm; wherein Mens Ignorance of the True GOD, and the Work of his Hands, made them interpret the ordinary *Phænomena* of Nature, as the Predictions or Fore-runners of ſome approaching Judgments; nay, every odd and uncommon Accident, was ſufficient to perplex them, and put them upon taking other Meaſures in the moſt neceſſary Affairs wherein they were engaged. Superſtition multiplied their Dangers, and encreaſed their Fears. It made them ſubject to imaginary Afflictions, and additional Sorrows which did not come properly within their Lot: And, as if the Calamities of Life were not enough of themſelves, and the Evil

of

of the preſent Day was not ſufficient to itſelf, they were continually borrowing from the Morrow; turning the moſt indifferent Circumſtances into Misfortunes, and the moſt trifling Accidents into real Evils. Thus did they walk in a vain ſhew, and diſquieted themſelves in vain. Their Superſtition was to them the very ſame in Effect, as That Judgment wherewith GOD threatned the Diſobedient *Iſraelites*: *And the* LORD *ſhall give thee a trembling Heart, and failing of Eyes, and ſorrow of Mind. And thy Life ſhall hang in Doubt before thee, and thou ſhalt Fear Day and Night, and ſhalt have none Aſſurance of thy Life. In the Morning thou ſhalt ſay, would* GOD *it were Even; and at Even thou ſhalt ſay, Would* GOD *it were Morning; for the Fear of thine Heart wherewith thou ſhalt fear, and for the Sight of thine Eyes which thou ſhalt ſee.* Deuter. xxvii. 65, &c.

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'TIS true indeed, as Knowledge encreaſed, theſe ſuperſtitious Fears decreaſed; and the further Men advanced into the Light, the leſs apt they were to Start; but began to ſmile at their former Fears; as Men in the Day-time, laugh at thoſe Dreams and Viſions,

SERM. X. which frighted them in the Night. But where Knowledge did not abound, theſe ſuperſtitious Fears remained; and do ſtill enſlave great Numbers of Men, and imbitter the innocent Comforts and Enjoyments of Life. But the ill Effects and Influence of Superſtition with Regard to Religion, is what I am principally to conſider. And This too was moſt apparent in the Heathen World.

BEFORE the Coming of our SAVIOUR, the Religion of the greateſt Part of the World, through the Agency of the Devil, ran out into a Multitude of little Rites, weak Obſervances, bodily Poſtures, and the like. And This was the beſt of it; For beſides theſe, there were many filthy Ceremonies and abominable Practices, with which their Religious Worſhip abounded.

MANY of the Rites and Uſages of the Jewiſh Nation were appointed on Purpoſe to croſs and thwart the Practices of the Heatheniſh Nations round about them. And our SAVIOUR came upon the ſame Deſign, to deſtroy the Works of the Devil, by Inſtituting a Religion directly oppoſite to the Heatheniſh

theniſh Worſhip: Which inſtead of running over into Superſtition, and being nothing elſe but a ſervile Flattery of GOD, and an Obſervance of him in little and weak Inſtances of Devotion, ſhould be plain and ſimple, rational and maſculine, Life and Spirit: Whoſe main Deſign was to employ and perfect the Mind and Spirit of Man; to advance and improve our Nature; and to bleſs us with Liberty, Peace, Largeneſs of Heart, Soundneſs of Mind, and a rational manner of Approach unto GOD. SERM. X.

SUCH a Religion as this, Chriſtianity plainly is and Superſtition does as plainly corrupt and deprave this Religion, and make it degenerate into Heatheniſm again. Inſtead of that ſtrong ſteady maſculine Piety, which Chriſtianity inſpires us with, and which is ſo glorious in itſelf, ſo ornamental to Human Nature, and of ſuch Advantage and Improvement; Superſtition expoſes us to infinite Follies and Weakneſs, it buſies and take us up with idle and empty Speculations, vain and inſignificant Ceremonies, and ſuch outward

SERM. X. Perſormances, as are of no Value in themſelves, nor of any Benefit to us.

FOR Superſtition, as it is founded in over timorous Notions of GOD, naturally puts us upon abſurd and prepoſterous Ways of pleaſing Him. This introduces a Multiplicity of Things into Religion, which are no Part of it; and by employing our Time and Thoughts upon needleſs and uſeleſs Performances, makes us neglect thoſe that are eſſential to Religion, and neceſſary to Salvation.

BESIDES: the Injunction of ſuperfluous Ceremonies, and binding them upon ourſelves or others, as Matters of Conſcience; makes ſuch Actions Duties, as were before indifferent; and ſo renders Religion more burthenſome and difficult than it is in its own Nature, betrays many into Sins of Omiſſion which they could not otherwiſe be guilty of, and fixes the Minds of the Vulgar upon the ſhadowy uneſſential Points, inſtead of the more weighty and more important Matters of the Law.

THIS was the Abuſe of the Ceremonies even of GOD's own Appointment among the Jewiſh People. They fell into Sins of Omiſſion without Number;

ber; and though the Law appointed Expiations for theſe, yet this did not prevent the Miſchief done to Religion. For between a Fear of committing theſe Sins, and a Care to make Atonement for them, the Generality of that People were wholly taken up in External Obſervances; without attending to the Subſtance of Religion, to inward Purity of Heart, and Holineſs of Life. SERM. X.

AND true Religion will always ſuffer very much, whenever it is loaded with external Performances, circumſtantial and indifferent Things: Eſpecially when theſe proceed from Superſtition, and are no other than the Inventions and Fancies of Men.

FOR if we conſider the other Cauſe of Superſtition I mentioned, *viz.* Mens Wickedneſs; and in order to countenance them in it, their Willingneſs to have Religion any Thing rather than what it really is: This effectually deſtroys Religion, and ſubſtitutes ſomething elſe in its Room. It takes Religion off from its right Foot, and places it in Things which are not it, and do no ways belong to it.

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THESE miſchievous Effects of Superſtition, are no where ſo viſible as in the Church of *Rome*. They have corrupted the Plainneſs and Simplicity of the Goſpel, and made Chriſtianity a more groſs and bodily Service than either Judaiſm or Heatheniſm. Their Worſhip conſiſts in mere Pageantry and Show, in antick Dreſſes and foppiſh Ceremonies, in a Variety of ſilly and ridiculous Rites, in divers Waſhings and Sprinklings, Changes of Raiment, and the like. So that all their Religion is loſt in the outward Trappings and Ornaments of it.

THEIR Devotion, inſtead of being an Exerciſe of the Mind and Underſtanding, the Act of the inner Man, is made up of ſenſeleſs and inſignificant Performances, of Pilgrimages and Proceſſions, of worſhipping Relicks, and Images of Gold, and Silver, or Stone, graven by Art and Man's Device; Of outward Acts of Abſtinence and Penance, of wearing of Sackcloth, and going barefoot, of Vows of Celibacy, Poverty, and Beggary, and many bodily Exerciſes which profit nothing.

THEIR

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THEIR Prayers are in an unknown Tongue, and to unknown Gods; to Saints, and Angels, and the Souls of Men departed this Life. And all this but a mere *Opus operatum*, a fruitleſs Labour of the Lips, ſaying over ſo many Prayers of ſuch a Sort, and at ſuch ſet Times, without Spirit or Underſtanding, without any Regard to any Thing but the Tale of their Beads.

IF from theſe Practices we paſs on to their Belief, and take a View of their Doctrines; we ſhall find them as far diſtant from the Truth, as theſe are from any real Goodneſs. As they are over much righteous in their Practice, and do a great deal more than is required or will ever do them good; ſo they teach and maintain this Doctrine, that they may be truly over much righteous; and are ſo arrogant as to think they may be better than they ought or need to be, and ſo merit Heaven both for themſelves and others. This Overplus of Righteouſneſs is thrown into a common Stock for the Uſe of thoſe who want it, and is diſ-

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penſed at certain Rates in Pardons and Indulgences to the greateſt Sinners.

'Tis needleſs to mention their Auricular Confeſſion, and Sacerdotal Abſolution; which, being performed at certain Periods, wipes out the old Score, and puts the greateſt Sinner upon a Level with the moſt righteous Perſon.

AND 'tis endleſs to enumerate all their other Doctrines whereby they have corrupted the Truth of Chriſtianity, and made the Goſpel look like a *cunningly deviſed Fable, a Stumbling-Block to the* Jews, *and to the* Greeks *Fooliſhneſs*; inſtead of, what it is to all who truly believe it, *the Power of* GOD, *and the Wiſdom of* GOD.

HERE then we ſee the ſad Effects of Superſtition, and how deſtructive it is of all Religion, of all true Piety and Virtue, wherever it prevails. And nothing leſs than theſe Inſtances could convince us of the mighty Force and Power which it has. For who would ever believe, without ſeeing it; that Men ſhould either pleaſe themſelves, or fancy that they pleaſed GOD, with ſuch Things as would offend any wiſe and ſober

ſober Man? That they ſhould ever imagine Religion to be a diſtinct Thing from Virtue, and to be preferred before it? That the Favour of God may be ſecured barely by outward Acts of Homage and Worſhip, by frequenting His Temple, and being punctual in all the Ordinances of Religion, without any Regard to our Lives and Converſation? That Luſtrations ſhould ſupply the Want of a clean Conſcience; and ſolemn Proceſſions be as good as a ſteady Courſe of Virtue? That external Performances ſhould be equivalent to inward Righteouſneſs, and an expiatory Sacrifice be of as much Value as a ſtrict and holy Life? That an Orthodox Faith ſhould atone for a wicked Life; and being wiſe above what is written, and believing beyond what is revealed, ſhould diſpenſe with being righteous in what is required, and doing what God has commanded us? SERM. X.

And yet this, and much more, is true of the Church of *Rome*; which is ſo over-run with Superſtition, that there is but little Religion left. And I wiſh I could ſay, that That was the only Church wherein it prevailed. For though

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though the Reformation has reſtored Chriſtianity to its Primitive Purity and Simplicity, and cannot be juſtly charged with Superſtition; yet ſo prone are even Good Men to this Weakneſs, that if they would examine narrowly into their Religion, they would frequently find ſomething of Superſtition lurking privately under it.

RELIGION is our reaſonable Service; and there is nothing which that enjoins us, but carries its own Reaſon with it. This is evidently the Caſe of the Chriſtian Religion, which is a Religion of Holineſs; There is nothing which that requires of us, but what is plainly calculated for this End, to purify us to GOD a peculiar People zealous of Good Works; to teach and to perſuade us to live *ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World.* But how many Things have been introduced into this Religion, and are daily practiced under the Name of it, which have no Tendency to this End?

THE *Kingdom of* GOD, *i. e.* the Power and Efficacy of the Goſpel, conſiſts not *in Meats and Drinks, but in Righteouſ-*

Righteouſneſs, and Peace, and Joy in the HOLY GHOST. *He that in theſe Things ſerveth* CHRIST, *is acceptable to* GOD, *and approved of Men.* SERM. X. Rom. xiv. 17, 18.

AND yet, it is no uncommon Thing to ſee thoſe who paſs for very Good Men, expreſs a greater Zeal for external Obſervances and indifferent Things, than for internal Habits and Diſpoſitions of Soul, and the ſubſtantial Virtues of a good Life; and be more concerned at the Neglect of the one, than at the Want of the other. A greater Streſs is often laid upon theſe, than upon Holineſs and Obedience; as if GOD could be ſooner propitiated by them.

AND this over much Righteouſneſs, and too ſcrupulous Obſervance of leſſer Things, and Fearfulneſs of neglecting them; whatever Show and Appearance it may have of Devotion, does the greateſt Diſſervice to Religion by terminating it in them; and renders all Converſe with the DEITY irkſome and grievous, while it begets a forced preternatural Zeal, an uneaſy Fear and Dread of offending, inſtead of that Love and Delight, that Peace and Joy, which

SERM. X. which ſhould poſſeſs our Minds, and ſpring up in the Soul that is truly religious.

BUT enough has been ſaid of the ill Effects and Influence of Superſtition, eſpecially upon Religion. 'Tis Time now to proceed

III. TO preſcribe ſome *Rules* for the Prevention or Cure of ſo great an Evil.

AND ſince Chriſtianity was deſigned for this End; the readieſt Way to prevent or cure all Superſtition and falſe Worſhip, is, To believe and obey the GOSPEL. But this is too general, becauſe Chriſtianity itſelf has been ſo depraved and corrupted, that what the Apoſtle ſaid to the *Athenians*, may at this Time be applied to many others; *I perceive that in all Things ye are too ſuperſtitious*, Acts xvii. 22. Men have *Zeal for Religion, but not according to Knowledge.* They would not be Atheiſtical or Profane, but Devout and Religious: But then this Religion, while it runs out into Superſtition, is in itſelf but a more ſpecious and diſguiſed Atheiſm; for it diſhonours the GOD it worſhips,

worſhips, inwardly hates Him whom it outwardly bends to. It cloaths Him with ſuch Paſſions, as it were a Sin to imitate; and has a Reverence for nothing in GOD, but his Power to hurt and deſtroy. And therefore, the SERM. X.

1ſt Rule I would preſcribe for the Cure of this Evil, is, To poſſeſs our Minds with juſt and worthy Notions of GOD, eſpecially of his Goodneſs. And ſince we are ſo apt to frame our Conceptions of the Divine Nature from our own and to fancy; *That* the moſt prevailing Attribute in GOD, which we moſt delight in ourſelves; we ſhould endeavour to free ourſelves from all Humour and Folly, Peeviſhneſs and Paſſion, Malice and Ill-nature; and to put on Bowels of Mercy and Compaſſion; to learn Kindneſs and Humanity; to be ruled by the Reaſon of the Thing, and the Right of the Caſe; to make all favourable Allowances for Mens unavoidable Frailties and Imperfections, Over-ſight and Surprize, and any other Diſadvantages they may be under.

If we were of this Temper ourſelves, we ſhould eaſily be brought to think thus of GOD, and ſhould not dare to

fix

SERM. X. fix ſuch a Character upon a BEING of Infinite Goodneſs, as every Good Man would be aſhamed of. And this would quickly baniſh all that Superſtition which ariſes from a groundleſs Fear and Dread of GOD, and renders our Religion a conſtant Burthen and a daily Task, while it conſiſts only in ſervile Flattery and ſlaviſh Obedience, and is calculated more to avoid GOD's Anger than to gain His Favour.

2. AS Superſtition conſiſts in a vicious Exceſs; ſo it would be an effectual Cure for it, to make the Scripture the ſole Rule both of our Faith and Practice.

AS to *Faith*; ſome have placed ſo much Merit in their miſtaken Notion of it, that they think they can never believe enough; and that they cannot pleaſe GOD better than by renouncing their Senſes and Reaſon, and ſwallowing the groſſeſt Abſurdities and Contradictions.

CHRISTIANITY, as laid down in the *New Teſtament*, is too plain and intelligible, and does not afford ſufficient Exerciſe for their Faith. 'Tis too eaſy for them, and they want to make it harder, and are for praying to the LORD in that

that Senſe, to *increaſe their Faith.* Not are they backward in their Endeavours of this Kind; as appears by their multiplying *Creeds*, and making *New Doctrines*, by deſcending to particular Explications of thoſe Truths which are revealed in Scripture only in general Terms; and in impoſing theſe upon others, though they often render the Truths which they endeavour to explain more difficult and perplexed, if not abſurd and inconſiſtent. SERM. X.

THEY ſeem to take a Pleaſure in inventing new Myſteries in Religion, and fancying ſomething inexplicable in every *Article* thereof; till they have made it a Contradiction to the moſt Natural Maxims and eaſy Senſe of our Minds, and a Scandal to Men of true Underſtanding.

BUT certainly this is to be *over wiſe*, and degenerates into Folly and Credulity. This is not the Faith of a Rational Creature, nor can it be acceptable to GOD. He can never be pleaſed with renouncing the Reaſon He has given us, or be delighted with our admitting ſuch Things for Truths as we cannot entertain with our Underſtandings

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ings about us. This is not the Obedience of Faith, but the Sacrifice of Fools; and as different from Faith, as Raſhneſs from true Courage, or Confidence from Knowledge. GOD is beſt pleaſed with a rational Belief, with the Uſe and Exerciſe of that Reaſon and Underſtanding which he has given us; and will never require us to believe any Thing which contradicts theſe. And after all, Men may talk as they pleaſe; but no one can be ſaid to believe more than he underſtands.

BUT not to enter any farther into this Matter, it is certainly ſufficient for any Man's Salvation that he believes the Scripture, and endeavours to believe it in the true Senſe of it, according to the beſt Judgment he has. For if we either forſake this Rule, or ſuffer others to interpret it for us, we expoſe ourſelves to every confident Pretender; and inſtead of believing the Truths of GOD, ſhall have our Heads filled with the Errors and Superſtitions of Men.

AS to *Practice*; if we make any Thing our Rule but Scripture, we ſhall quickly run into endleſs Folly and Superſtition. This was the Caſe when Tradition

Tradition was ſet upon an equal Foot with Scripture. The Divine Precepts were little regarded; and a great Variety of Superſtitions and Human Preſumptions had prevailed ſo far, as to grow into univerſal Practice, and to gain, though very unjuſtly, the Credit even of Apoſtolick Tradition. SERM. X.

OUR SAVIOUR told the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, That *in vain they worſhipped* GOD, *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.* For that *laying aſide the Commandments of* GOD, *they held the Tradition of Men, as waſhing of Pots and Cups, and many other ſuch like Things.* This has been the Fault of the Chriſtian, as well as of the Jewiſh Church; to forſake the Word of GOD, and ſet up another Rule of Practice, Tradition and the Practice of former Times, or Mens preſent Humours and Fancies. But if we deſire to be the better for our Religion, and would not have our *Labour to be in vain in the* LORD; we muſt take our Directions from GOD Himſelf, and not think to pleaſe Him by doing ſuch Things as He has not commanded nor ſpoken, neither came it into His Mind.

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WE ſhould conſider that GOD is the Great King of Heaven and Earth, and will be worſhipped in his own Way, and make us happy upon his own Terms. He will be obeyed and obſerved by His Creatures, not according to their Humours and Fancies, but after the manner which He has preſcribed. So that though we be righteous over much, and do never ſo many Things more than we are commanded; yet if we neglect what we are commanded, all that we do will profit us nothing, and turn only to our greater Condemnation.

WE ſhould conſider farther, that GOD is infinitely Wiſe and Good, and that the Laws which He has given us are more likely to make us happy, than any Devices and Inventions of our own. Nay, they have an evident Tendency to this End; whereas the Things which Men would ſubſtitute in the Room of theſe, are of an indifferent Nature; and if we ſpent our whole Lives in them, would not make us one Jot the better. And therefore

3*dly* and *Laſtly*, IF we would avoid Superſtition, we muſt in all our Religious

gious Performances have a principal Regard to that which is the End of all Religion, the making ourſelves really better, and improving in every Grace and Virtue. Nothing which we do in Religion, ſignifies any Thing, if it does not contribute to this End. Though we are never ſo conſtant and frequent in the Worſhip of GOD, and walk never ſo diligently in all His Ordinances: Though we faſt Night and Day, and *pray without ceaſing*: Though we attend never ſo often upon Prayers and Sermons, and receive the Bleſſed Sacrament every Month, or every Week: Yet if all This works no Alteration in us for the better; if it neither mends the Frame and Temper of our Minds, nor reforms the Courſe and Actions of our Lives; we had as good do nothing. We are *righteous over much*, but not at all religious. SERM. X.

AND yet this is a Point wherein, I fear, great Numbers deceive both themſelves and others. They are apt to meaſure their Religion by theſe Things: So much of theſe outward Performances, is with them ſo much Religion. They think themſelves Religious, and paſs for

SERM. X.

ſuch with others, purely upon this Account. But this is a great and fatal Miſtake. For though a wilful Neglect of theſe Things be Prophaneneſs and Irreligion; yet the mere formal outward Practice of them, is nothing elſe but Superſtition. A Man may be ſuperſtitious in the true, as well as in a falſe Religion; in Things of GOD's Appointment, as well as in thoſe of his own Invention; if he either over does them, or does them without any Regard to the End for which GOD deſigned them. The End is our own Growth and Improvement in Goodneſs. So far as this is promoted by what we do, ſo far it is Religion; ſo far as it comes ſhort of this End, it is Superſtition. To refuſe the Uſe of thoſe Means which GOD has ordained for our Holineſs here and our Happineſs hereafter, is prophane and wicked; and to think the bare Uſe of theſe Means ſufficient without attaining the End, is Folly and Superſtition: And between theſe two, Religion conſiſts; that is, in the Uſe of theſe Means in order to this End, and in the Attainment of this End by the Uſe of theſe Means.

AND

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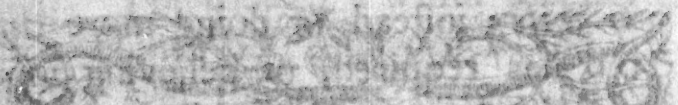
AND therefore inſtead of being *righteous over much*, and making ourſelves *over wiſe*; inſtead of doing more than GOD has required, or believing more than He has revealed; let us apply ourſelves to the Diſcharge of thoſe Duties which GOD has commanded us, and to the Belief of thoſe Truths which He has plainly declared. This, inſtead of deſtroying ourſelves, and ruining our Religion; will tend to our own Improvement, and the Intereſt of the Religion of CHRIST; will make us wiſe unto Salvation, and righteous unto Life Eternal.



1 Cor. xiii. 13.

—— *But the greateſt of theſe, is Charity.*

SERM. XI.

IF we turn back to the foregoing Chapter, we ſhall find that there was a Contention among the *Corinthians* for Superiority and Precedency in their Aſſemblies, upon Account of their Spiritual Gifts. This is what the Apoſtle their argues againſt; and, in the Cloſe of that Chapter, he promiſes to ſhow them a more excellent Way than this emulous producing of their Gifts, and contending who ſhould take Place, and be firſt heard in their Aſſemblies. *But covet earneſtly the beſt Gifts*; or, as the Word ζηλοῦτε ſhould

SERM. XI. be rendered, *but ye conteſt* one with another, whoſe particular Gift is beſt: And yet *I will ſhew you a more excellent Way*, i. e. a true and ſure Way for a Man to get an Excellency and Preference above others; and that is, by enlarging himſelf in Charity, and excelling in That, without which a Chriſtian, with all his Spiritual Gifts, is nothing.

ACCORDINGLY he ſpends this whole Chapter in explaining and commending Charity, and proving it to have the Preference of all other Gifts and Graces whatever. In handling this Subject, I ſhall

I. ENDEAVOUR to ſtate the true Notion of Charity, and ſhow wherein it conſiſts.

II. I WILL explain the Arguments whereby the Apoſtle proves this Virtue to be the greateſt, and to have the Preference of all others.

III. I SHALL draw ſome Inferences and Obſervations from the Whole.

I. To

SERM. XI.

I. To ſtate the *true Notion* of *Charity*, and to ſhow wherein it conſiſts.

AND ſince the Nature of this Virtue cannot be better explained than it is by the Apoſtle, it will not be amiſs to take a brief Survey of that noble Deſcription which he has drawn of it in this Chapter; where 'tis obſervable that the Apoſtle compares it more particularly with thoſe Gifts which the *Corinthians* ſo much magnified, and in his whole Deſcription has an Eye to their Conteſts and Diſputes.

THUS, for Inſtance, becauſe the Gift of Tongues was the chief Thing which they admired, and which they were ſo forward of ſhowing, to the Confuſion rather than the Edification of their Aſſemblies: The Apoſtle tells them, that though *he could ſpeak with the Tongues of Men and of Angels*, i. e. though he had this Gift in the greateſt Perfection, *yet if he had not Charity, he ſhould become as ſounding Braſs, or a tinkling Cymbal*; which fills the Ears of others, without any Advantage to itſelf, by the Sound it makes.

ANOTHER

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ANOTHER Gift which they highly valued, was that of Prophecy, in all Senſes of that Word; and a Power of working Miracles: And therefore the Apoſtle adds, *Though I have the Gift of Prophecy, and underſtand all Myſteries and all Knowledge*, i. e. though I could foretell Things to come, and underſtood the Law and the Prophets, and all the Myſteries contained in them, ſo as to be able to teach and explain them to others; and *though I had all Faith, ſo as to be able to remove Mountains*, i. e. to the higheſt Degree and Power of Miracles, ſo as to do what is next to impoſſible; and *have not Charity*: I am nothing, of no Value or Eſteem with GOD.

MANY had theſe Gifts, who yet were deſtitute of the Truth and Power of Godlineſs; as our SAVIOUR tells us, *Matth.* vii. 22, 23. *Many will ſay to me in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy Name, and in thy Name have caſt out Devils? and in thy Name have done many wonderful Works? And then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you: Depart from me, ye that work Iniquity.*

THOUGH

THOUGH *I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and give my Body to be burned.* This some would imagine to have been an infallible Mark of Charity, of the greatest Zeal for GOD and Love to Men; Yet even this high Pitch of Performance, Men have arrived to, and actually practiced, out of Vain-glory, and a Desire of perpetuating their Name; And therefore the Apostle adds, that *though we do this, and have not Charity* (he supposes all this may be done without the least Charity) *it profiteth us nothing.* SERM. XI.

HAVING thus compared Charity with some of the most eminent and celebrated Gifts among the *Corinthians*; the Apostle goes on to describe it by some of the most eminent Properties and Effects of it; in enumerating which, he has still an Eye to that Emulation and Contest there was among the *Corinthians* about the Dignity and Preference of their Spiritual Gifts; and tacitly reproves them for it; since this Virtue would inspire them with a quite contrary Carriage and Behaviour.

FOR *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; Charity envieth not; Charity vaunteth*

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vaunteth not itſelf, is not puffed up: Doth not behave itſelf unſeemly, ſeeketh not her own, is not eaſily provoked, thinketh no Evil: rejoyceth not in Iniquity, but rejoyceth in the Truth: beareth all Things, believeth all Things, hopeth all Things, endureth all Things.

OR, in other Words, Charity is Long-ſuffering, gentle and benign; without Emulation, Inſolence, or being puffed up; is not ambitious, nor at all Self-intereſted; is not ſharp upon other Mens Failings, or inclined to ill Interpretations: Charity rejoyceth with others, when they do well; and when any thing is amiſs, is troubled and covers their Failings: Charity believes well, hopes well of every one, and patiently bears with every Thing.

FROM hence the Apoſtle proceeds to a new Topick, and commends Charity from the Duration and Perpetuity of it. *Charity never faileth.* Charity will never ceaſe as a thing out of Uſe, which is the Caſe of other Gifts. *For whether there be Prophecies, they ſhall fail:* They ſhall be laid aſide in another Life, when they ſhall have received their Accompliſhment. *Whether there be Tongues,*

Tongues, they ſhall ceaſe; for there will then be no further Occaſion for different Languages. *Whether there be Knowledge, it ſhall vaniſh away*: The Knowledge whereby Men now look into, and explain the Meaning of Scripture, will no longer be of Uſe; but will be aboliſhed by that clear and full View, which we ſhall then have of Things. *For we know in part, and we prophecy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part ſhall be done away.* The Knowledge we have in this State, is but partial and imperfect; and the Explication we are able to give of Scripture, is ſhort and defective: But when we are freed from theſe groſs Bodies, and got out of this material World into a World of Spirits, and a State of Purity and Perfection; Light will be darted immediately into our Souls *from the Father of Lights*, and there will be no longer need of theſe imperfect Ways of Information, whereby we arrive at our preſent imperfect Knowledge.

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WHEN *I was a Child, I ſpake as a Child, I underſtood as a Child, I thought as*

SERM. XI. *as a Child; but when I became a Man, I put away childiſh Things.*

OUR preſent and our future Knowledge differ as much from one another, as the Knowledge of a Child and a Man. Of many Things we know nothing; and thoſe which we know, we know but very imperfectly, and are liable to much Ignorance, and many childiſh Miſtakes. But when we come into another World, we ſhall be freed from Errors, and our Knowlege will be enlarged and compleated.

Now *we ſee through a Glaſs darkly; but then Face to Face.* Now we ſee but by Reflexion, the dim, and as it were enigmatical Repreſentation of Things; but then we ſhall ſee Things directly, and as they are in themſelves; as one Man ſees another, when they are Face to Face. *Now I know in part; but then ſhall I know, even as alſo I am known.* Now I have but a partial, ſuperficial Knowledge of Things; but then I ſhall have an intuitive comprehenſive Knowledge of them, as I myſelf am known, and lie open to the View of ſuperior ſpiritual Beings; not by the obſcure and im-

imperfect Way of Deductions and Reaſoning. SERM. XI.

AND *now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, theſe three; but the greateſt of theſe is Charity,* as that which will abide when all other Gifts ſhall ceaſe and become uſeleſs. For when Faith ſhall be turned into Viſion, and Hope into Fruition; when we ſhall be in full Poſſeſſion of the moſt compleat Happineſs; Charity will ſtill continue.

FROM this Deſcription of Charity, it plainly appears, that it is not to be taken for any one ſingle Grace or Virtue, excluſive of all others. It is not Liberality or Munificence; for this, we ſee, even in the higheſt Degree of outward Expreſſion, may be without Charity; Mere giving of Alms, is but a ſmall and inconſiderable Branch of this Divine Virtue.

IT is not a Zeal for GOD and Religion; For this too may be externally carried on to the higheſt Pitch, and ſhine even in the Flames, and yet be deſtitute of Charity.

BUT it is a Complication of theſe, and ſuch-like Virtues; it is the moſt ſincere and intenſe Love of GOD, and of our

SERM. XI. our Neighbour for GOD's Sake, and in Obedience to his Commands. 'Tis a Habit of univerſal Goodneſs, a right Frame and Diſpoſition of Mind, which will influence all our Actions, govern all our Paſſions, and determine them to their proper Objects. With reſpect to GOD, it will ſhow itſelf in all the Acts of Piety, Reverence and Devotion, of Faith and Hope, Contentedneſs and Reſignation, Prayer, Thankſgiving, and the like; a true Zeal for Religion and Virtue, and hearty Concern for the Honour of GOD, and the Salvation of Men.

WITH Regard to our Neighbour, in which View the Apoſtle chiefly conſiders it in this Place; it will exert itſelf in univerſal Benevolence and Beneficence to all Mankind. It will reſtrain thoſe Paſſions which would provoke us to Acts of Fraud and Injuſtice, Unkindneſs and Inhumanity to others; and will effectually ſecure the Performance of whatever we owe to others in the Diſcharge of the relative Duties of Life. For all theſe are but ſo many different Expreſſions of Charity to our Neighbour, according to the different Relations in which he ſtands. Charity to

our

our Governors, is Obedience; to our Superiors, Respect; to our Equals, Familiarity; to our Inferiors, Condescension. Charity to Strangers, is Hospitality; to our Acquaintance, Kindness; to the Ignorant, Instruction; to the Poor, Liberality; to the Feeble hearted and Afflicted, Comfort and Compassion; to our Friends and Benefactors, Fidelity and Gratitude; to our Enemies and Persecutors, Forbearance and Forgiveness. SERM. XI.

THUS comprehensive is this great Duty; it is the Parent of all Virtues, and includes whatever we stand obliged to either to GOD or Man. Hence it is stiled in Scripture, *The fulfilling of the Law. The Bond of Perfectness. The End of the Commandment.* Which Passages plainly imply thus much; That it is the great End and Design of all Religion, especially of the GOSPEL of our SAVIOUR, to plant in us the Habit of this Grace or Virtue of Charity; and that whoever is endued with it, has every Thing which GOD requires of him in order to his Acceptance and Salvation. Rom. xiii. 10. Col. iii. 14. 1 Tim. i. 5.

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BUT this will more fully appear from the

II. THING I propoſed, which was to explain the *Arguments* whereby the Apoſtle proves this Virtue to be the greateſt, and to have the Preference of all others. And theſe are three.

1. THE abſolute Neceſſity of Charity in order to our Acceptance with GOD,

2 THE genuine Fruits and Effects of it.

3. ITS Duration and Perpetuity. Upon which Accounts we ſhall find how true it is, that of all thoſe Gifts and Graces which the Apoſtle mentioned, the *greateſt is Charity*.

1. I SAY, This Charity is abſolutely *neceſſary* in order to our Acceptance with GOD.

THOSE other Gifts which the Apoſtle mentions in this Chapter and compares with Charity, were divided to every Man ſeverally according to the Will of that SPIRIT from whence they all proceeded; as he tells us, *ver.* 11. of the foregoing Chapter. GOD was pleaſed to deal them out to different Perſons,

Perſons, at different Times, in ſuch manner as the Neceſſities of his Church, and the Good and Edification of its Members required. So that it was not in any Man's Power to acquire all or any of theſe Gifts, as he pleaſed. Which of theſe he ſhould have, or whether he ſhould have any of them, depended upon the Will of Almighty GOD. And therefore none of theſe, however excellent in themſelves, were indiſpenſably neceſſary to any Man's Salvation. Nothing is ſo, but what is in every Man's Power. But to ſpeak, or to underſtand all Languages; to foretell Futurities; to interpret difficult Paſſages of Scripture; to work Miracles, to heal Diſtempers, and the like; were Things which at that Time, as well as now, were not at Mens own Diſpoſal; they were extraordinary Gifts of the SPIRIT. SERM. XI.

AND whichſoever of theſe are now to be acquired (as ſome of them may, and that in no mean Degree,) ſuch as the Knowledge of Languages, the Interpretation of Scripture, and other Parts of Human and Divine Learning; even theſe, as they depend upon natural Parts and Abilities, Time and

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Leiſure, and other Opportunities; ſo they are properly the Gifts of GOD; and 'tis not in every Man's Power to be thus wiſe and knowing, any more than 'tis to be rich and great in this World.

BUT the Grace of Charity, though That too is the Gift of GOD, yet 'tis ſuch a Gift as He is ready to beſtow upon every one that asks it, and ſincerely endeavours after it. His SPIRIT is ever ready to produce this Virtue, in thoſe who are willing to comply with his Motions. So that though every Man cannot obtain any other Gifts which he pleaſes, whether ordinary or extraordinary; though every Man cannot be a Great Linguiſt, or a profound Scholar; yet 'tis in every Man's Power to have Charity, to love GOD with all his Heart and all his Soul, and his Neighbour as himſelf.

EVERY Man may ſincerely intend the Glory of GOD, and the Good of Mankind; and make this the End and Aim of all his Actions. This is what every Man may and muſt do, if he would be a Chriſtian.

THIS lies open to all Ranks and Profeſſions of Men, and is an Attainment

ment which is level to the meaneſt Capacities. If we conſider GOD, as He is in Himſelf, we cannot chooſe but love Him, becauſe He is all Beauty and all Attraction. All have received enough from the Hand of GOD; and cannot but be ſufficiently ſenſible of their Obligations to Him, to inflame them with the moſt ardent Love and Affection towards Him. And he that conſiders all Men as Objects of their CREATOR's Love, as Members of that great Family, of which GOD Himſelf, who careth for all alike, is the common Father and Governour; will quickly diſcern the great Reaſonableneſs of univerſal Benevolence and Good-will: And, unleſs he offers Violence to his own Nature, will find himſelf inclined to be helpful and beneficial to all Men according to his Power. SERM. XI.

THIS Virtue of Charity being thus in every Man's Power, is indiſpenſably required of every Man; and the Want of it is always chargeable upon every one as a Crime. This will ſupply all other Defects whatever; but nothing whatever, can ſupply the Want of this, or will be accepted in its Stead.

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The moſt excellent Gifts, and the higheſt Attainments in any other Way, ſignify nothing, and will avail us nothing, nor be of any Eſteem or Account with GOD, if they do not proceed from or are not accompanied with Charity. This is the common Soul which animates the whole Body of Chriſtian Graces and Virtues; all which are lifeleſs, ſenſeleſs and inſignificant, without it. Whatever Acts of Piety and Devotion we perform towards GOD, in whatever Way we expreſs our Zeal for His Honour and Glory, though we give our Bodies to be burned, and lay down our Lives for our Religion; yet, even this, if it proceeds not from a ſincere Love of GOD, is of no real Worth or Value. Whatever Acts of Charity we do to Men, though we give all our Goods to feed the Poor, yet if this be not done out of a true Love to Men, and Obedience to GOD, but out of an Affectation of popular Applauſe, out of Pride and Vain-glory, or any other Principle whatever, except that of unfeigned Charity; however it may benefit others, it will profit ourſelves nothing.

ON the contrary, if we truly love GOD, and are in Charity with Men; though we ſhould be unable to expreſs this by any outward Acts, or to do any Thing which promoted the Honour of GOD, or the Good of Mankind; yet it will be as acceptable in the Sight of GOD, as if we were able to do never ſo much: Becauſe this is what He has put into every Man's Power, and abſolutely required of every Man; whereas the other depends upon thoſe external Gifts, which He diſtributes to every Man according to His Good Pleaſure. SERM. XI.

THIS is that willing Mind the Apoſtle ſpeaks of, 2 *Cor.* viii. 12. which wherever it is, and it ought to be every where; *is accepted, according to that a Man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*

2. THE next Argument which the Apoſtle uſes to commend Charity, and prove it to have the Preference of all other Gifts; is taken from the genuine *Fruits* and *Effects* of it.

THESE are deſcribed both affirmatively and negatively. The good Things it doth, and the ill Things it doth not,

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but wholly prevents; are distinctly set down, as so many just Commendations of it. All other Gifts are not only of no Value without Charity, of no Esteem with GOD; but they are of no Benefit or Advantage to Men, if they be not governed and directed by it. What the Apostle says of Knowledge, is equally true of several other Gifts; that it *puffeth up*, 1 *Cor.* viii. 1. Much Wisdom and Learning, great Riches and Power, are apt to swell Men with Pride and Vanity, to make them insolent and contentious, jealous and censorious. This was the Case of the *Corinthians*. But Charity has a quite contrary Tendency; and works in all those who are possessed of it, the contrary Effects and Dispositions. It is of a quiet and peaceable Temper, it calms Mens Passions, composes their Differences, and heals their Divisions. It cultivates Friendship, and strengthens Society, by removing all Grounds and Occasions of Quarrels and Contentions. It rejoices at the Good and Happiness of others, and does all it can to promote it. It grieves at the Miseries and Misfortunes of others, and tries all possible Ways

to

to prevent or remove them. In a word, This is the only true Principle of good Actions, and the grand Security of our Obedience to GOD, and our Uſefulneſs to Men. SERM. XI.

WHATEVER others Gifts we have, if they are not influenced and directed by Charity, will be abuſed to ill Purpoſes; and the greater and more excellent they are, they render us capable of doing ſo much the more Miſchief, and conſequently expoſe us to the greater Condemnation. 'Tis Charity that improves and advances all our other Gifts, and makes them ſerviceable and beneficial to ourſelves and others. Nay, Charity will, in a great Meaſure, ſupply the Want of moſt other Attainments. A ſincere Love of GOD, and of our Neighbour for GOD's Sake, will direct us more ſecurely in our Duty to both, than the Underſtanding all Knowledge and all Myſteries; which, if Charity be wanting, inſtead of diſcovering our Duty, will help us to loſe it in nice and ſubtle Diſtinctions. If any Man will do GOD's Will, he will not long be ignorant of it: And if he truly loves his Neighbour, this will quickly

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ly teach him thoſe Offices of Kindneſs which are owing to him. There will be but little need of any written Law, where this Principle prevails.

THIS Law of Love will ſupply thoſe Defects, to which all Laws, but eſpecially human Laws, are ſubject; and take in many Inſtances which the Letter of the Law could not provide for. There are many Ways whereby Men are injured, and the Peace of the World is diſturbed every Day, of which the beſt Laws can take but little or no Cognizance. Surlineſs and Ill-nature; Peeviſhneſs and Paſſion; Diſrepect to Superiors, and Ingratitude to Benefactors; Falſeneſs to our Friends and Confidents, and Inhumanity to Strangers; Envy and Malice; Calumny and Detraction; Lying and Vain-boaſting; Fraud and Circumvention; with numberleſs other Inſtances; are Things which, in many Caſes, the Laws can take no hold of; can neither puniſh the Sinner, nor prevent the Sin.

BUT Charity would be an effectual Remedy againſt all theſe Miſchiefs. For That *is kind and long-ſuffering; envieth not, vaunteth not itſelf; is not puffed*

puffed up, doth not behave itſelf unſeemly; ſeeketh not her own, is not eaſily provoked, thinketh no Evil; rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth: Beareth all Things, believeth all Things, hopeth all Things, endureth all Things. SERM. XI.

THESE are the genuine Properties and Effects of true Charity. And theſe are truly greater in themſelves, and more beneficial to the World, than all thoſe Attainments which Men are apt to value ſo much, and to be ſo much valued for; and which, if they were not guided and conducted by Charity, would be ſo far from having any of theſe good Effects, that they would only diſturb the World, and make Men uneaſy to themſelves, and hurtful to others; as in Fact they frequently have done, and ſtill daily do in many notorious Inſtances.

BUT ſuppoſing theſe Gifts were never ſo excellent in themſelves, and beneficial to others; yet ſtill there is one Conſideration behind, which gives Charity the preference to them all: And that is,

3*dly*, ITS *Duration* and *Perpetuity*.

THE

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THE Time is coming, when all other Gifts and Attainments will ceaſe, and become inſignificant; when all the Uſe and Occaſion we now have for them, will be ſuperſeded by a more perfect State of Things, and ſwallowed up by greater Excellencies and Perfections both in the ſame and other Kinds. *But Charity will never fail.* That will ſtill continue in Force, and will influence our Happineſs to all Eternity.

WHATEVER other Gifts we have, are of no farther Uſe, than as they ſerve to promote the Knowledge and Practice of true Chriſtianity, till it is arrived to that Fullneſs whereunto GOD deſigned it ſhould be carried.

Eph. iv. 11, &c.

FOR this Reaſon, our SAVIOUR *gave ſome Apoſtles, and ſome Prophets, and ſome Evangeliſts, and ſome Paſtors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Miniſtry, for the edifying of the Body of* CHRIST: *till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of* GOD, *unto a perfect Man, unto the Meaſure of the Stature of the Fullneſs of* CHRIST.

AND therefore, whenever this End is attained, which it will certainly be in another

another Life; all theſe Offices, and the ſeveral Gifts which are neceſſary to diſcharge them, will of Courſe ceaſe, being nothing elſe but the Means of obtaining this End. SERM. XI.

WHATEVER Graces and Virtues are now enjoyned us, and however perfect we may be in the Practice of them; are enjoyned us only as ſo many Tryals of our Obedience, and as they are fit and proper Exerciſes for this State of Infirmity and Imperfection; *But when that which is perfect is come, that which is imperfect ſhall be done away.* When we are out of this State of Probation, and in actual Poſſeſſion of our eternal Inheritance; when we are like the Angels of GOD, ſpiritual and immortal; there will no longer be any Room for the Exerciſe of Patience and Reſignation, Faith and Hope, Temperance and Meekneſs, Mortification and Self-denial.

THESE, and ſuch other Virtues, will then be out of Date; all Objects and Occaſions of employing them, will ceaſe. *But Charity will never ceaſe.* That is the Habit and Diſpoſition of Soul wherein true Holineſs conſiſts, which was the Source and Spring of all the Virtues which

SERM. XI. which we practiced in this Life, and which will remain when theſe Virtues are ceaſed. Though we ſhall then be uncapable of expreſſing our Charity either to GOD or Man, in ſuch a manner as we do here; yet we ſhall ſtill continue to Love GOD as the moſt Perfect and Excellent BEING, to bear an univerſal Good-will to all the Members of that Heavenly Society, and mutually to rejoyce in the Happineſs of each other.

HOWEVER we now ſtand divided into Party-Intereſts and petty Diſtinctions; *They who ſhall be accounted worthy to obtain That World, and the Reſurrection of the Juſt*, will all be of one Heart and one Soul, will have a mutual Intereſt in one another's Joys, and be all Partakers of the ſame common Felicity and Glory.

ALL Envy, Malice, Hatred, and Ill-will ſhall be for ever baniſhed from thoſe Manſions of Bliſs; and we ſhall no longer be divided in our Affections, when our Judgments ſhall be the ſame, and we ſhall all think the ſame Thing, have the ſame common Intereſt; and all conceivable Grounds and Occaſions of Quarrels

rels and Contentions will be finally re- SERM. moved. Thus will Charity, as it re- XI. ſpects our Neighbour, remain in another Life; be improved and exalted to the higheſt Degree, and make no ſmall Part of that Happineſs which we ſhall then enjoy.

BUT Charity, as it conſiſts in the Love of GOD, is the very Eſſence and Perfection of our future Happineſs. 'Tis our Love of GOD, that makes us endeavour to be like Him in This Life, in univerſal Purity and Holineſs; and in This muſt be laid the Foundation of our Enjoyment of Him in the next. 'Tis the Love of thoſe with whom we converſe, that makes us happy in the Enjoyment of them; we can reap no Satisfaction from the Company and Converſation of thoſe whom we do not love; and the better they are whom we love, and the more we love them, the greater will our Happineſs be.

NOW GOD, as He is the Beſt and moſt Perfect BEING, will naturally raiſe in all good Minds the moſt paſſionate and unſpeakable Love. And this Affection, when directed to the moſt Worthy Object, exalted to the higheſt Degree,

SERM. XI. Degree, and perpetually kept up to that Degree, without any remiſsneſs or decay; muſt neceſſarily be the Occaſion of the moſt perfect Happineſs.

THUS is Charity, or the Love of GOD, not only a neceſſary Qualification or Capacity for Heaven, but the formal Cauſe of all the Happineſs of it; ſince without it there would be no Enjoyment of GOD, nor any Pleaſure in his Preſence. But if the Love of GOD rule in our Hearts, we ſhall be infinitely delighted in the Viſion and Fruition of Him, and ſhall be happy to all Eternity in giving *Bleſſing and Glory to Him that ſitteth on the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.*

THUS I have explained the *Arguments* whereby the Apoſtle proves this Virtue of Charity to be the greateſt, and to have the Preference of all others. I come now in the

III. AND *Laſt* place, to cloſe all with ſome *Inferences* and *Obſervations* from the Whole. And,

1. WHAT has been ſaid upon this Argument, ſhould effectually excite us to that which the Apoſtle preſſes upon us

us in the Beginning of the next Chapter, to follow after Charity; ſince without it we are nothing, and all that we are, or have, or do, will avail us nothing, and ſtand us in no Stead. SERM. XI.

THAT emulous and contentious Spirit, by which the *Corinthians* were acted, and which occaſioned this excellent Diſcourſe of the Apoſtle's, is ſtill very common in the World; and Men are apt to covet earneſtly thoſe Gifts which make the greateſt Appearance, and are moſt likely to raiſe them in the Eſteem and Approbation of others: And all this not only to the Neglect, but many times to the utter Deſtruction of Charity.

BUT ſuch as theſe would do well to conſider, that if in their eager Purſuit after other Attainments, they either overlook or miſs Charity, they do but graſp at the Shadow, and loſe the Subſtance; and the higher they riſe in other Acquirements, the greater will their Fall be, and they will ſink ſo much the deeper into Miſery and Ruin.

CHARITY is that which GOD indiſpenſably requires of all Men, and has

SERM. XI. put it in the Power of all Men to obtain. 'Tis that which renders us like GOD, and makes us Partakers of the Divine Nature. 'Tis that which improves and exalts all our other Gifts, and turns them to the Benefit and Advantage of ourſelves and others. This is the true Spring of all great and good Actions; and without this, the greateſt Knowledge and Wiſdom, Power and Might, and all other Attainments whatever, are not only uſeleſs, but hurtful. It was this moved GOD to ſend His SON into the World for the Redemption of Mankind: This inclined the SON of GOD to become Man, to aſſume our Nature, that *He might make us the Children of* GOD, *and exalt us to Everlaſting Life.*

AND if we would be Imitators or Followers of GOD in doing Good, or reap any Benefit from what He has done for us; we muſt be endued with this Virtue, which is the only Thing that will make us capable of performing acceptable Service now, or qualify us for our Reward hereafter.

2. FROM

2. From what has been ſaid, we may eaſily learn, whether we are poſſeſſed of this Virtue or not. We may certainly know it by its Fruits. SERM. XI.

If we are of a merciful and forgiving Temper, kind and compaſſionate, and tender-hearted: If we envy not the Welfare and Proſperity of others, nor rejoice at their Miſcarriages and Failings: If we are candid in our Interpretation of other Mens Words and Actions, and willing to hope the beſt: If we are not ſharp upon their Failings, nor eaſily provoked at the Injuries we meet with, but can patiently put up leſſer Damages, and bear with every Thing of this Kind: If we are not proud, or ambitious, or ſelf-intereſted, but of a meek and humble Spirit, contented with the Allotments of Providence, and extending our Care and Concern to the whole Community of Mankind: I ſay, if we are all this, which we may eaſily know; we are certainly poſſeſſed of this excellent Virtue; For theſe are the genuine Fruits and Effects of it.

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BUT if we are proud and contentious; cenſorious and ill-natured; peeviſh and paſſionate, fretful and impatient; if we be envious and malicious; covetous and ſelf-intereſted, angry and revengeful: Let our Pretences and Performances be what they will in other Reſpects, though our Vows be never ſo large, and our Diſcipline ſeverer than an Hermit's; though our Alms be as profuſe as the Squandring of a Prodigal, and our Sorrow for our Sin riſe even to Diſtraction and Deſpair; though we give all our Goods to feed the Poor and our Body to be burned; we have no Charity and it will profit us nothing.

3. AND *Laſtly*, Hence we may be furniſhed with the beſt Proof we can poſſibly have, on this ſide the Grave, of our good State and Condition towards GOD; and may know how we ſtand in His Favour. And this is a Point of the utmoſt Importance, upon which all the Comfort we enjoy in Life, and the Hopes we have in our Death, wholly depends. But 'tis impoſſible to make any Eſtimate of this, by

by any other Rule than that which the foregoing Diſcourſe affords us. SERM. XI.

TEMPORAL Proſperity and Adverſity are no certain Marks of GOD's Favour or Diſpleaſure. The Wiſe Man's Obſervation is generally true, That in this Life *all Things come alike to all Men, and there is but one Event to the Righteous and the Wicked.*

THE greateſt Gifts, and the higheſt Attainments, whether ordinary or extraordinary, even thoſe of a miraculous Kind, are no ſure Characters of our being Good Men, and in a State of Grace; ſince we ſee Men have had, and may have theſe in the utmoſt Degree, and yet be finally and eternally loſt.

NOR is the mere outward Performance of our Duty in the moſt difficult Inſtances, and to the greateſt Exactneſs, any infallible Sign of a regenerate State; ſince there is nothing of this Nature but what has been done by Men deſtitute of Charity, and void of any Love either to GOD or Man.

'TIS the Cauſe, and not the Suffering, that makes the Martyr. 'Tis not

SERM. XI. the external Act, but the inward Spring and Motive, the Design and Intention with which it is done, that makes it truly Virtuous and Praiseworthy. This is the Ground of that Exhortation of the Apostle to the *Corinthians*, Chap. xvi. 14. *Let all your Things be done with Charity.* He would have whatever was done amongst them, either in their Publick Assemblies, or elsewhere, to be done with Affection and Good-will one to another.

THIS Virtue of Charity, as it respects both GOD and Man, is the Principle upon which must be done whatever we do towards both. 'Tis this and nothing else but This, will avail us in CHRIST JESUS; *For in* JESUS CHRIST *neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but Faith which worketh by Love*, Gal. v. 6. This is an undeniable Argument of our Saving Knowledge in the Gospel, and our Progress in true Christianity; *Beloved, let us love one another; for Love is of* GOD; *and every one that loveth is born of* GOD, *and*

and knoweth GOD. *He that loveth not, knoweth not* GOD; *for* GOD *is Love,* 1 John iv. 7, 8. And *Chap.* iii. 14, 15. *We know that we have paſſed from Death unto Life, becauſe we love the Brethren. He that loveth not his Brother abideth in Death. Whoſoever hateth his Brother, is a Murtherer; and ye know that no Murtherer hath Eternal Life abiding in him.* SERM. XI.

IF therefore we be deſirous of Divine Conſolation, and would have Hope towards GOD; let us labour after this Heavenly Gift, and let the Love both of GOD and Man dwell richly in us. This will fill us with Joy unſpeakable, and full of Glory; and give us the moſt lively Senſe of GOD's Favour, and be an Earneſt or Foretaſte of our future and eternal Well-being. By this alone, our SAVIOUR tells us, *Matth.* XXV, men will be ſaved at the laſt Day; and for Want of this alone, they will be damned. And Reaſon good; becauſe all other Virtues are but preparatory to this, and are included in it; and

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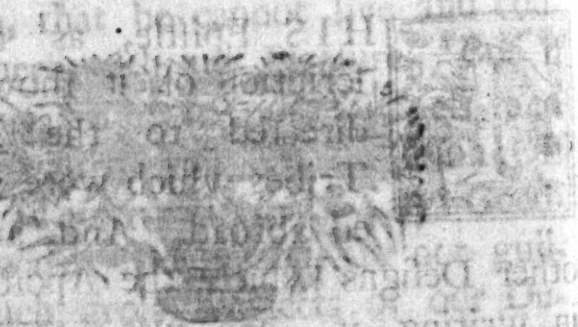
when this comes to be perfect, the Reſt will ceaſe to be, and be ſwallowed up in it.

AFTER Juſtice and Temperance, Prudence and Fortitude; nay, after Faith and Hope themſelves ſhall be no more; Charity will reign in Heaven, and make the Felicity of the Bleſſed, and be the chief Ingredient of all the Joys and Glories of that Place.

AND therefore he who has not been habituated to this Virtue in this World; will go into another, like a Stranger into ſome Foreign Country, whoſe Language, Laws, and Manners are unknown to him, and ſo different from his own, that he cannot live and converſe there with any Pleaſure. But if we have made it our Buſineſs and Study to learn this Divine Leſſon; If we live in univerſal Charity and Goodwill towards Men, and are not guilty of ſuch groſs Neglects of our Duty towards GOD, as argue Hypocriſy and Inſincerity: That perfect Love which caſteth out Fear, will give us a clear Proſpect of our Pardon and Accep-

Acceptance, notwithſtanding the Imperfections of our beſt Actions, and the Failings and Infirmities to which we have been liable. Charity will eaſily procure Forgiveneſs of theſe, upon a true Repentance; and, when we are removed out of this World of Troubles and Temptations, will work upon us in a more powerful Manner, will compleat our Happineſs, and fulfil our Joy, and ſecure to us the Poſſeſſion of them to all Eternity. SERM. XI.

JAMES



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JAMES ii. 10.

For whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all.

THIS Epiſtle, as the Inſcription of it ſhows, was directed to the Twelve Tribes which were ſcattered abroad. And, amongſt other Deſigns which the Apoſtle had in writing it, one was, to correct ſome pernicious Errors he found crept in among them, and which had an ill Influence upon their Practice. A remarkable Inſtance of this we meet with in the *Text*, which is directly levelled

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velled againſt a very looſe and licentious Doctrine maintained by ſome of their Teachers, *viz.* That GOD ſet ſo great a Value upon Some of His Laws above others, that, whoever ſtrictly obſerved them, ſhould be diſpenſed with for their Neglect of the reſt: And therefore that Men ſhould endeavour to find and ſingle out the darling Precept, that, by exerciſing themſelves more eſpecially about That, they might ſecure the Divine Favour, notwithſtanding all their other Breaches of GOD's Law, how many or great ſoever they were.

OTHERS held, That GOD gave them ſo many Commandments on purpoſe, that by doing Any of them, they might be ſaved; and not with any Intention of having them all obſerved. And therefore that whoever obeyed any one Precept, was in a ſafe Condition, and would have all his other Tranſgreſſions forgiven upon that Score.

LASTLY, It was aſſerted by others, that Mens good and bad Works, their Virtues and Vices were to be weighed in a Balance; And if the Good did but preponderate, and out-weigh the Bad;

Bad; if Mens Virtues were but more and greater than their Vices; their Vices of whatever Kind or Degree, were atoned, and would never riſe up in Judgment againſt them. SERM. XII.

THAT the Words of my *Text* are levelled againſt ſuch looſe Opinions as theſe, is evident from the Occaſion of them, which was briefly this. The Apoſtle had been taxing thoſe he writes to, with Partiality and Reſpect of Perſons; and preſcribes the Obſervance of that Royal Law of Charity, of loving their Neighbour as themſelves, for the Cure of this Sin. For no Man would himſelf be content to be deſpiſed becauſe he was poor, or to have another preferred before him for being rich. And therefore if they had ſuch Reſpect of Perſons in their Aſſemblies, *i. e.* their Courts of Judicature; they were guilty of Sin, and condemned by the Law as Tranſgreſſors, *i. e.* they tranſgreſſed the Law of Charity, of doing as they would be done by; which Law compriſed all the Duties of the Second Table. And becauſe they would be apt to urge their exact Obſervance of this Law in other Matters, as an Excuſe for their Breach

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SERM. XII. of it in this Instance; he tells them, That *whosoever shall keep the whole Law* in other Matters, *and yet*, knowingly and wilfully, *offend in one Point*; *he is guilty of all.*

THESE Words may sound very harsh at first Hearing, as if they favoured that Opinion of the *Stoicks*, which makes all Sins equal, and all Sinners equally guilty and criminal, and liable to the same Degrees of Punishment. But the Apostle means no such thing as this. He does not say, that he who offends in one Point, actually offends in every other; or that he who keeps the whole Law, excepting one Point, is as great a Criminal, and as guilty before GOD, as he that keeps no Part or Precept of the Law at all. He does not say, for Instance, that he who is guilty of this Partiality and Respect of Persons, is likewise guilty of Theft, Murder, Adultery, and every other Sin; or will be punished as much as he that is thus guilty. But the Apostle's Meaning is, that That Man will never pass for an Observer of the Law, who allows himself in the Breach of it in any one Instance; but will be dealt with as a Transgressor of

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the Law, though he keeps it never ſo exactly in all other Matters. SERM. XII.

His Aſſertion is general, That ſuch an one *is guilty of All*, i. e. of tranſgreſſing the Law, of not keeping the whole Law; but not of Breaking every particular Precept of it. As he that wounds a Man in any particular Member, wounds the whole Body, though not every Member of it. And he that breaks one Link of a Chain, breaks the whole Chain, though not every Part of It. And he that fails in one Note, though he keeps exact Time in all the reſt, ſpoils the Harmony of the whole Conſort. So he that offends in one Point of the Law, breaks the whole Law; though not the whole of the Law, not every Branch of it.

In diſcourſing upon which Words, I ſhall,

I. Show in what Senſe he that offends in one Point of the Law, may be ſaid to be guilty of all; or in other Words, how far the Guilt of the Breach of any one Commandment extends itſelf to the reſt.

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II. I SHALL aſſert the Juſtice and Reaſonableneſs of this Communication or Imputation of the Guilt of Breaking one Command, to the reſt.

III. AND *Laſtly*, I ſhall make ſome farther Uſe or Improvement of this Doctrine.

I. I AM to ſhow in *what Senſe* he that offends in one Point of the Law, may be ſaid to be guilty of all; or in other Words, how far the Guilt of the Breach of any one Commandment extends itſelf to the reſt.

THAT the Guilt of breaking any one of GOD's Commandments, does in ſome Manner and Meaſure extend itſelf to the reſt, is evident from the very Words of the *Text*. For when St. *James* ſays, That *whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all*; He plainly means, that this ſingle Offence has ſome ſort of Influence upon the other Parts of his Duty. So that the Guilt of any one Sin, does not terminate in that Sin; but extends itſelf to other Inſtances, and diminiſhes

miniſhes the Virtue of that Obedience which we pay to the reſt of GOD's Laws.

THIS is what I ſhall endeavour to explain and account for in the following Particulars.

1. HE that wilfully offends in any one Point of GOD's Law, is not *ſincere* in his Obedience to the reſt; upon which account he may be ſaid to be guilty of all.

FOR by allowing himſelf in the Violation of any of GOD's Laws, he plainly ſhows that thoſe which he has obſerved, were not obſerved out of Obedience and Conſcience towards GOD, *i. e.* out of a true Principle of Religion; becauſe this would incline him as ſtrongly to have kept that one Point wherein he has offended, as thoſe which he has fulfilled; And therefore whatever Motives induced him to tranſgreſs the Divine Law in that Inſtance, would not fail of having had the ſame Effect, if they had met him in any other Inſtance of his Duty. Whatever the Temptation was which drew him aſide from the ſtrait Rule of Right in one *particular* Caſe, would have made

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him ſwerve from it in any other, wherein he had been equally aſſaulted.

IF, for Inſtance, as St. *James* puts the Caſe, the Point we offend in, be Over-looking and Deſpiſing our poor Brethren, and refuſing them that kind Reſpect which is their Due: As this plainly proceeds from Pride; ſo wherever Covetouſneſs prevails as much, it will incline us as ſtrongly to defraud them of other Things which belong to them.

IF the particular Duty wherein we have been moſt deficient, be Temperance or Chaſtity; and the Reaſon of this Defect be, as moſt certainly it is, becauſe theſe Virtues are moſt contrary to our natural Tempers or acquired Habits, and the contrary Vices are what we take moſt Pleaſure in: I ſay, if this was the Caſe of Juſtice and Humility, and we were as much in Love with filthy Lucre and falſe Honour as we are with ſenſual Pleaſure; we ſhould be guilty of as many Acts of Pride and Oppreſſion, as we are of Intemperance and Uncleanneſs.

SO that the true Reaſon of this partial Obedience to GOD's Laws, of our offending

offending in one or more Inſtances, while we are ſtrict Obſervers of the reſt; is, becauſe we have had ſuch ſtrong Motives and Temptations to tranſgreſs in thoſe Inſtances, as we have not yet met with in others. For whether it be Profit or Pleaſure, Intereſt or Inclination, Secrecy or Impunity, or whatever elſe it was that induced us to tranſgreſs in thoſe Inſtances, and allow ourſelves in thoſe Sins; would have worked as ſtrongly upon us in other Caſes, if they had been ſo applied. Had our Obedience met with the ſame Trials in thoſe Laws of GOD which we have kept, as in thoſe which we have broken; it would have proved as defective in the one, as it has in the other. Had thoſe Sins which we have abſtained from, been as pleaſant and profitable to us as thoſe we have indulged, we ſhould have allowed ourſelves equally in them. And had thoſe Virtues which we have practiced, been as diſagreeable or dangerous as thoſe we have neglected; we ſhould have had as few of the one as the other, that is, we ſhould have had no Virtues at all.

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BY offending in one Point, by allowing ourſelves in the wilful Practice of any one known Sin, it is evident that this is the Caſe of our Obedience to the reſt of GOD's Laws; that it is not ſincere, that it does not proceed from Religious Motives, from a Love and Fear of GOD, a juſt Senſe of his Authority over us, and a firm Belief of His Promiſes and Threatnings. Were our Obedience ſincere, and proceeding from ſuch Motives as theſe; it would be uniform and univerſal. It would make no Exception or Reſerve, in Behalf of any one beloved Sin. It would extend itſelf equally to all GOD's Commands, without preferring one before another; unleſs where He Himſelf, in Caſe of Competition, has given the Preference. But it would admit of no wilful Sin at any Time, or upon any Account whatever. That Faith in GOD, That Fear and Love of Him, which enabled us to overcome Temptations, and keep cloſe to our Duty in one Inſtance; would, if they were genuine and true, enable us to do it in any other; and moſt of all,

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if it be but one ſingle Sin which we have to contend with. SERM. XII.

AND therefore he that lives in the Breach of any one of GOD's Laws, he that allows himſelf in any ſingle Tranſgreſſion of his Duty; is not ſincere in his Performance of the reſt, and may therefore juſtly be ſaid to be *guilty of all.*

2. HE that offends in one Point, may be ſaid to be guilty of all, upon Account of that *Contempt* which he ſhows of the Divine Authority.

THE Authority of GOD is ſtamped equally upon all His Laws; and therefore whichſoever of theſe we break, we are guilty of a manifeſt Contempt of that Authority upon which the reſt depend. And thus St. *James* explains himſelf in the Verſe after the *Text*; *For he that ſaid, do not commit Adultery, ſaid alſo, do not kill. Now if thou commit no Adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a Tranſgreſſor of the Law,* i. e. It is the ſame Lawgiver that impoſed the one and the other Law, that forbids Adultery and Murther; and His Authority is equally neglected, whichſoever of theſe Laws we tranſgreſs.

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THE Authority of GOD is the ſame in any one of His Laws, as in another. Nay, by the ſame Authority with which he impoſed any one Precept of the Law, was the whole Law enacted; and therefore this Authority of the Lawgiver is as plainly deſpiſed by the Breaking any one of His Laws, as by the Violation of them all. And he that will not be reſtrained by the Conſideration of the Divine Authority from the Violation of GOD's Law in one Point, would not, under the like Temptations, refrain from it in another.

SO that though it be but a ſingle Tranſgreſſion which we are guilty of, though we offend but in one Point; yet this is as effectual a Denial of GOD's Right to impoſe any Laws upon us, as if we had offended in all: Since he had as good a Title to our Obedience in that Law which we have tranſgreſſed, as in thoſe which we have kept; And He may juſtly expoſtulate with us for that ſingle Tranſgreſſion, in our SAVIOUR's Words, *Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the Thing which I ſay?* By refuſing to do any

any one Thing which He has commanded us, we diſown His Authority over us, and tacitly deny that He has any Right to govern us. For if we really owned His Authority, why ſhould we not ſubmit to it in this, as well as other Inſtances, ſince 'tis undoubtedly the ſame in all: And we might as well have refuſed our Obedience to Him in thoſe Caſes where we have paid it, as in this where we have with-held it. SERM. XII.

AND no doubt but the ſame diſobedient and rebellious Temper would have ſhewed itſelf in other Inſtances as well as this, had they been as croſs to our Intereſt or Inclination as This. Upon Account therefore of the ill Influence which our refuſing to ſubmit to GOD's Authority in any one of His Laws, has upon our Obedience to the reſt; and as it manifeſtly tends to weaken and deſtroy His Authority in general; he that offends in one Point, and thereby calls in queſtion the Authority of GOD in that Law which he tranſgreſſes, may truly be ſaid *to be guilty of all.*

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3. HE that keeps the whole Law, and yet offends in one Point, may be ſaid to be *guilty of all*, becauſe he will be dealt with as a Tranſgreſſor of the whole Law; and the Guilt of Breaking the Law in one Point, will ſpoil the Virtue, and deprive him of the Reward of keeping it in the reſt.

WE are to conſider the Law of GOD collectively, as a Body or Syſtem of Rules for the Government of our Lives and Actions; all of which we muſt equally obſerve, if we would reap the Reward promiſed to Obedience. This Body we are to preſerve entire, without diſmembring or mangling it in any Part, or ſeparating what GOD Himſelf has joined together. The Reward is not annexed to the Obſervance of this or that particular Precept, but to the general Obſervation of the Divine Law. 'Tis not ſaid of any one Precept excluſive of the reſt, *This is the Way, walk ye in it*, Iſa. xxx. 21. But, *if thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments*, Matth. xix. 17. *None*, ſays our SAVIOUR, *ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will*, i. e. the whole Will, *of my Father which*

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is in Heaven, Matth. vii. 21. If we would obtain the Character of being righteous, or the Reward belonging to ſuch; we muſt walk *in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameleſs*, Luke i. 6. This is the conſtant Language of Scripture, and the Tenor of that Covenant which is made between GOD and Man. SERM. XII.

THEN *ſhall I not be aſhamed*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *when I have Reſpect unto all thy Commandments*, Pſal. cxix. 6. He eſteemed That to be a ſhameful Obedience, which had any ſecret Exception or Reſerve; and reckoned, that nothing leſs than an univerſal Obedience to all GOD's Laws, could give him any Ground of Hope and Confidence towards GOD.

AND thus it muſt needs be; ſince if we except what Precepts we pleaſe out of the Divine Law, and allow ourſelves in the Tranſgreſſion of them, we cannot be looked upon as Obſervers of the Law; which is as obligatory in thoſe Points wherein we offend, as in thoſe wherein we keep it. One wilful Breach of the Law in any of its Branches, expoſes us to the Curſe of the Law; for it is written, *Curſed* Deut. xxvii. 26.

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is he that confirmeth not all the Words of this Law to do them. And though he that offends but in one Point, will not be ſo ſeverely puniſhed as he that offends in many, or in all; yet That ſingle Offence is ſufficient to make him forfeit the Reward of all his other Obedience. *When the Righteous turneth away from his Righteouſneſs and committeth Iniquity; all his Righteouſneſs that he hath done, ſhall not be mentioned: In his Treſpaſs that he treſpaſſed, and in his Sin that he hath ſinned, in them ſhall he die.*

Ezekiel xviii. 24.

THERE is no compounding with GOD for the Neglect of ſome of His Laws by a ſtrict Obſervance of the reſt; nor can any one wilful Sin be atoned for by all our other Virtues. GOD will not be ſerved deceitfully and by Halves. If we would be his Servants, we muſt be wholly His, and obey Him in all His Commands: If we wilfully refuſe this in any known Inſtance of Duty, we forfeit the Reward of all our other Services, and ſhall be dealt with as unfaithful and diſobedient Servants. Upon which Account, he that offends in one

one Point may be ſaid to be *guilty of all.* SERM. XII.

THIS may ſuffice for the Firſt Thing propoſed; which was, to ſhow in what Senſe he that keeps the whole Law, and yet offends in one Point, may be ſaid to be *guilty of all*; or, in other Words, how far the Guilt of Breaking any one of GOD's Commandments extends itſelf to the reſt. And this, we ſee, it does; as the wilful offending againſt any one of GOD's Laws, is an Argument that our Obedience to the reſt was not ſincere; as it is a manifeſt Contempt of that Authority which is equally ſtamped upon all the Laws of GOD, and from whence they all derive their Force; as it deprives us of the Reward of all our other Obedience, ſince nothing leſs than an uniform and univerſal Obedience to the whole Will, to all the Laws of GOD, can entitle us to Eternal Life.

II. THE *Juſtice* and *Reaſonableneſs* of this Imputation or Communication of the Guilt of breaking one Commandment to the reſt, is what I am in the Second Place to conſider.

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THE Sum of the Apoſtle's Doctrine in this Place, is this: That it is not ſufficient to our Salvation, that we are exact in the Performance of ſome particular Duties, while we live in an open Neglect of others: Nay, though we ſhould keep all GOD's Laws but one, the voluntary Violation of that one Law will exclude us from any Reward of our Obedience to the reſt: That the wilful continuing in any one known Sin, is enough to ruin our eternal Intereſt, notwithſtanding any other Virtues we may be poſſeſſed of.

THE Juſtice and Reaſonableneſs of this, every one can readily diſcern in another Man's Caſe, though they will not ſee it in their own. Hence it is that Men are moſt ſevere upon thoſe particular Sins in other People, which themſelves are moſt free from. Thus the covetous Worldling inveighs moſt of all againſt the profuſe Squanderer, and pronounces Prodigality to be the greateſt Sin; and the Prodigal is equally ſevere in condemning the Covetous. The Effeminate and Unclean will be ſevere enough upon the Proud and Ambitious, and the Ambitious as impartial in ſentencing

cing the Unclean. The Swearer and the Drunkard will join in crying out upon the Thief and Murtherer, and the Robber and Deſtroyer will exclaim as much againſt the Intemperate and Prophane. Ask but any one of theſe, whether the Sins of the other will not turn to their Eternal Ruin, and they will readily agree to it; nay, though it be but one ſingle Sin which is thus indulged and lived in, they will own that even this ſingle Sin may prove thus fatal. SERM. XII.

HENCE it is very common to hear Men, when they are giving Characters of others who are notorious for any great Failing, to be very liberal in praiſing them for their other Virtues; but ſtill with a ſevere Reſerve for the Sin they are guilty of. Such an one, will they ſay, is a Good Man in the main; he has many excellent Qualities; he is ſtrictly juſt and honeſt in his Dealings; he is very charitable and friendly; But he is frequently drunk, or he is a common Swearer; and what a Pity is it that his Life is not all of a-piece! For theſe Vices ſpoil all his other Virtues, and render them inſignificant.

ANOTHER

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ANOTHER is perfectly ſober, a conſtant Frequenter of the Church; but he is very covetous, and guilty of many Acts of Injuſtice and Oppreſſion; and this is enough to exclude him from GOD's Favour, notwithſtanding all his Sobriety and Devotion.

NOW if we thus judge in other Mens Caſes, why ſhould we not think the ſame thing in our own, ſince there is juſt the ſame Reaſon? For any great Failure in our Duty, will have the ſame ill Effect upon our Spiritual Condition, as the like Failures in other Men have upon theirs. And if the Continuance in any one known Sin, will endanger another Man's Salvation; ſo it will our own. No Sin is the leſs ſinful, the leſs pernicious in itſelf, or the leſs hateful to GOD, becauſe we love it and take Pleaſure in it. And if GOD will not paſs over, and pardon the Intemperance or Uncleanneſs of one Man, neither will He the Covetouſneſs or Ambition of another: But whatever the Sin is which is thus indulged, and whoever he be that indulges it, GOD will neither pardon the Sin, nor accept the Sinner upon account of his other

other Virtues, but will deal with him as a Tranſgreſſor of his Law, and ſhow him no Marks of his Favour. SERM. XII.

AND great Reaſon there is why GOD ſhould thus deal with Men, and exclude them for ever from any Inheritance in his Kingdom, though it be but one ſingle Sin which they allow themſelves in; becauſe without this, the Authority of his Laws and the End of his Government could never be ſecured, nor the Honour and Intereſt of His Kingdom maintained. For if GOD ſhould pardon the Intemperance of one Man; by the ſame Reaſon He ſhould forgive the Uncleanneſs of a ſecond; the Pride of a third; the Covetouſneſs of a fourth; and ſo on, through the whole Round and Compaſs of Tranſgreſſions. For by the ſame Reaſon every Man is to be allowed his darling Sin; and at this Rate the whole Law will be ſet aſide, and all the Commandments of GOD be made of none Effect, while this Precept is freely tranſgreſſed by one, and that by another; and every one of them by ſome one or other. And Heaven, which is repreſented as a Place or State of the utmoſt Purity and Perfection, into which

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which nothing that is unclean, no wicked or unreaſonable Perſon can or ſhall be admitted; will become the common Receptacle of all manner of Vice and Wickedneſs, and be filled with Sinners of every Sort and Size.

So that if GOD had any Intention to be obeyed in thoſe Things which He has commanded us; if He would have his Authority kept up by our Obedience to thoſe Laws which He has given us; if it be his Deſign to promote the Practice of univerſal Piety and Virtue in the World; if it was the End of our SAVIOUR's Coming *to deſtroy the Works of the Devil, and to purify unto Himſelf a peculiar People zealous of good Works*; then it is highly juſt and reaſonable for GOD to inſiſt upon univerſal Obedience to all his Laws, and not to allow of the wilful Tranſgreſſion of any one; ſince this Allowance not only weakens the Authority of the whole, but opens a Door to univerſal Libertiniſm and Licentiouſneſs.

IF, after GOD has given us a Body of Laws for the Government of our Lives and Actions, we are at Liberty to pick and chooſe which of theſe we will obſerve,

ſerve, and which we will neglect, (for by the ſame Rule that we exempt our Obedience from one of the Divine Laws, we may exempt it from a ſecond, and a third;) I ſay, if every Man may ſingle out but one Precept to tranſgreſs, and allow himſelf but in the Enjoyment of one Sin; then every Man would have nothing elſe to do, but to ſtudy the Gratification of himſelf in his moſt prevailing Appetite and Paſſion. This is what every Man might do; and then, 'tis plain, there is an End of all Religion: Which was not deſigned to give us a Licence to ſin in any one Inſtance, though never ſo deſirable; but to lay a Reſtraint upon us more eſpecially there, and to curb us moſt of all, where we are moſt apt to run out. SERM. XII.

HAVING thus explained the Doctrine of my *Text*, and aſſerted the Juſtice and Reaſonableneſs of it; I come now in the

III. AND laſt Place, to make ſome farther Uſe and Improvement of what has been ſaid, and ſo conclude.

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1. THIS Discourse may serve to give us a just Notion of the Guilt and Danger of Sin in general; and to let us see that Sin is, what the Apostle elsewhere stiles it, *exceeding sinful, very hateful to* GOD, *and pernicious to Men.*

IT is of a very malignant and infectious Nature, and diffuses its Venom round about it; so that nothing that is good and virtuous can thrive with it, or near it. Wherever it grows, it corrupts the Soil, choakes the good Seed that is sown, and renders it unfruitful. The Guilt of any sinful Action, much more of the habitual Practice of any Wickedness, does not terminate in that particular Act or Habit; but has an ill Influence upon the other Parts of our Conduct, and spoils the Virtue of our best Actions. It is like the Leprosy, which defiles the Man whatever Part it seizes; and though but one Member directly suffers, yet all the Members suffer with it; and the Distemper, if not timely stopped, brings Death upon the whole. And therefore

2. THIS should caution us against harbouring any one Bosom-Sin, or indulging any one darling Lust; and teach us

us not to think the more favourably of our Condition, becauſe we are exact and punctual in the Performance of every other Part of our Duty. SERM. XII.

THE Sin we are guilty of, may prove never the leſs fatal to us, becauſe it is but one ſingle Tranſgreſſion; for any one known Sin wilfully continued in, may ruin us for ever, as well as many. It will certainly exclude us from the Happineſs of Heaven, as well as many. And though I do not ſay that GOD will puniſh that Man as ſeverely, who allows himſelf in one Sin, as him who allows himſelf in many; yet I believe I may ſay, that He juſtly might. The *Text* ſeems to intimate as much, by pronouncing ſuch a one guilty of all; And the Reaſons already alledged would juſtify as much; Becauſe he that freely allows himſelf in the Violation of any one of GOD's Laws, ſhows thereby that he would be as ready to tranſgreſs any or all of the reſt, if the Temptations from without, and his Inclination from within, were the ſame or equal; and conſequently that his Obedience to the reſt, is not owing to his Virtue. And there-

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fore GOD, who regards the Mind itſelf more than the outward Act, might juſtly puniſh this vicious Diſpoſition as much as if it had broke out into vicious Actions.

BUT whether this be the Caſe or no, 'tis enough to deter us from the Practice of any one known Sin, to conſider, that That will fruſtrate all our Hopes of Happineſs, and bring us to Eternal Ruin. And therefore though it be as dear to us as a Right Hand or a Right Eye, and as difficult to be parted with; we ſhould pluck it off, and caſt it from us; *for it is better to enter into Life blind or maimed, than having two Hands or two Eyes to be caſt into Hell Fire.*

WHEN we are come ſo near to the Kingdom of GOD, that we lack but one Thing; when there is but one beloved Sin that ſeparates between us and Heaven; we do juſtly deſerve to be excluded, if we cannot find in our Hearts to part with that one Sin, that we may be admitted. We are highly unworthy of the Favour of GOD, and of thoſe Things which he has prepared for them that love Him, if we prefer the

the Enjoyment of one Luſt or Vice before them; And if we will not purchaſe them at ſo cheap a Rate as the giving up one ſingle Folly or Paſſion, we deſerve never to have them. So that this Circumſtance of our offending but in one Point, is ſo far from being any Mitigation of our Caſe, that I fear 'tis in ſome Reſpects an Aggravation of it. SERM. XII.

3. AND laſtly, This may convince us of the Neceſſity of univerſal Obedience to all the Laws of GOD, if we would either obtain the Reward promiſed to thoſe who keep GOD's Law, or avoid the Puniſhment threatened to the Tranſgreſſors of it.

THOSE corrupt Doctrines I mentioned at the Beginning of this Diſcourſe, which had crept in among the *Jews*, and occaſioned the Words of my *Text*; ſeem to prevail very much among Chriſtians. 'Tis to be feared, there are many who imagine themſelves in a ſafe Condition, becauſe the Sins they are guilty of are but few in Compariſon, and are by far out-numbered and outweighed by their Virtues. They cannot deny but that they live in the Ne-

SERM. XII. glect of ſome of the Duties of Religion, but they hope this Neglect is amply recompenced by a conſtant and exact Performance of others; and that the Zeal and Warmth which they expreſs for theſe, will atone for all their Coolneſs and Indifference in other Matters.

BUT we muſt not think of making any ſuch Compoſition as this with GOD. He requires Obedience to all His Laws; and our keeping ſome will be ſo far from excuſing the Tranſgreſſion of others, that the Tranſgreſſion of any one deſtroys the Virtue and deprives us of the Reward of that Obedience which we pay to the reſt. *For whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he ſhall be guilty of all.*

SO that if we would recommend ourſelves to GOD, we muſt do it by paying a juſt Reſpect to His Authority, *i. e.* an impartial and univerſal Obedience to all His Laws. Nothing leſs than this, will be eſteemed a ſufficient Acknowledgment of the Duty which we owe Him.

IF

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IF we would make ourſelves meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, we muſt do it by abandoning all the Works of Darkneſs, by cleanſing ourſelves from all Filthineſs both of Fleſh and Spirit; for if we retain a Love for any one Sin, we are both unqualified and uncapable to enter into Eternal Life.

BUT this univerſal Obedience muſt not be taken for perfect unſinning Obedience. In this Senſe, there is no Man who keeps the whole Law, or any one Precept of it, but is guilty of all and every Part of it: Since there is no Duty which we perform, no Virtue which we practice, but is accompanied more or leſs with Defects and Failings, and is far from being abſolutely perfect. And therefore by univerſal Obedience to all the Laws of GOD, no more is meant than an equal and uniform Regard to the whole Will of GOD: That we do not exempt our Obedience from any one or more of GOD's Laws; that we do not allow ourſelves in the Neglect of any known Duty, or the Practice of any known Sin; but that

SERM. XII. we make it our ſincere Endeavour to fulfil all Righteouſneſs, to abound in every good Word and Work, and, according to the beſt of our Power, to be holy as GOD is Holy, and *perfect even as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*

LUKE

Preached before the King at *Hampton-Court.*

LUKE xiii. 23, 24.

Then ſaid one unto Him, LORD, *are there few that be ſaved?*

And He ſaid unto them, Strive to enter in at the ſtrait Gate; for many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.

OUR Bleſſed SAVIOUR having, in the foregoing Chapter, laid down ſome very ſublime Precepts and ſtrict Rules of Life, and inſiſted largely upon them: They who heard Him, thought SERM. XIII.

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thought that theſe were Heights, which, in all Probability, but few would come up to; That if His Goſpel required ſuch difficult Terms there would be but few who would embrace it: and fewer ſtill who would obtain the End of their Faith, even the Salvation of their Souls. To which Purpoſe one of greater Curioſity than the reſt, thus addreſſed himſelf to our SAVIOUR, *Lord, are there few that be ſaved?* But our SAVIOUR returned no direct Anſwer to this Queſtion. He refuſed to gratify this Perſon's Curioſity; and choſe rather to inſtruct him, and all of us, how we may be ſaved; and that is by a conſtant, and diligent Application of ourſelves to this Work.

WHEREBY He ſufficiently intimates, that whatever the Difficulties are, they are not inſuperable: That the Number of thoſe who ſhall be ſaved, is not determined by any fatal Decree, excluding all others from it, or rendering their beſt Endeavours ineffectual: That none ſhall miſcarry for Want of Power, but for Want of Will to uſe it; and that All might be ſaved, if all would ſincerely purſue the right Method. This is evident

evident from the general Exhortation which our SAVIOUR makes to all. *And He ſaid unto them, Strive to enter in at the ſtrait Gate; for many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.* SERM. XIII.

IN diſcourſing upon theſe Words, I ſhall conſider

I. UPON what Accounts the Way or Gate to Heaven is called ſtrait, and wherein the Difficulties of Entring conſiſt.

II. WHO they are, that *ſeek to enter in and ſhall not be able.*

III. TO vindicate the Divine Goodneſs and Juſtice in this Particular.

IV. AND laſtly, to draw ſome Inferences from the Whole.

I. AS to the *Firſt* of theſe: Upon *what Accounts* the Way or Gate to Heaven is called ſtrait.

IT is to be obſerved, that as Heaven is frequently repreſented to us under the Notion of a City or a Houſe,

ſo

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ſo, upon the Account of the Difficulties of Entring into Heaven, the Way or Gate to it may fitly be called ſtrait. Now theſe Difficulties are in all Reſpects the ſame with the Difficulties of a holy and virtuous Life. As nothing leſs than univerſal Goodneſs, the forſaking and hating of all known Sin, and the Love and the Practice of all known Virtue, will come up to the Terms of the Goſpel Covenant, and gain us Admittance into Heaven: So the Difficulties we meet with in fulfilling this Condition, make the Gate ſtrait, and the Way narrow that leadeth unto Life.

THESE Difficulties are greater or leſs, as Men have been more or leſs accuſtomed to the Ways of Sin and Wickedneſs, as they are engaged in a vicious Courſe of Life, or enſlaved to any particular Luſt or Paſſion; and they are always greateſt at the Beginning, at our firſt Entrance upon a Life of Religion and Virtue. But whatever they are, they muſt be ſtrove with 'till they are overcome; or we ſhall ſeek to enter, and not be able.

II. WHO

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II. WHO they are that thus ſeek and ſtrive in vain, was the *Second* Thing to be conſidered.

AND They are ſuch as do not begin this Work of Reformation and Amendment till 'tis too late in Life, and they want Time to do it in: Or, 'till GOD has withdrawn His Grace, without which they can do nothing. 'Till their vicious Habits are grown too ſtrong and ſtubborn to be maſtered; or GOD will wait no longer for their Return; but either cuts them off by an unexpected End, or gives them over to a Reprobate State of Mind. All ſuch as theſe, muſt neceſſarily ſeek in vain, becauſe they knock when the Door is ſhut; and look for Mercy, when it is the Time of Juſtice.

BUT *They alſo ſeek to enter, and ſhall not be able*; who, though they begin this Work betimes, make little or no Progreſs in it, for want of minding it as they ought, and exerting their Strength where the real Difficulty lies: and That is in being inwardly and univerſally Holy, truly and thoroughly Good and Virtuous. What great Pains ſoever

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ſoever we take, and how many Things ſoever we do in Religion, if they do not make us really better Men than we were before, better in the Frame and Temper of our Minds, and better in the Courſe and Actions of our Lives; our Religion is vain, and will profit us nothing, and we ſhall *ſeek to enter, and ſhall not be able.*

MANY there are who thus ſeek in vain, by diverting their Care from neceſſary to indifferent Matters.

SOME place Religion in Externals, in outward Forms and Ceremonies, in Things purely poſitive, whether of Divine or Human Appointment. They frequent Prayers, and Sermons, and Sacraments; *They obſerve Days and Months, and Times and Years*; and think that theſe Performances will recommend them to GOD. There were ſuch Chriſtians in the Apoſtles Days, who did theſe Things in Compliance with the Moſaical Inſtitution; of whom he ſays, *He was afraid, leſt he had beſtowed upon them Labour in vain.* And many ſuch there are amongſt us, of whom we may juſtly have the ſame Fears. For all

Gal. iv. 10.

all theſe Things are but Means in order to a farther End, our own Growth and Improvement in true Goodneſs; and if we uſe theſe Means without any Regard to this End, or without attaining this End, they are altogether inſignificant. SERM. XIII.

EVEN they who uſe theſe Means with regard to this End, may miſcarry, by not purſuing the End far enough, and extending it to all Things that concern it.

FOR Men may go a great way in Religion, and do many Things that are Good, and yet not be ſuch as the Goſpel has promiſed to reward with Eternal Life. They may overcome many Sins, and acquire many Virtues, and yet be Bad Men ſtill, if they are enſlaved to other Sins, and deſtitute of other Virtues. And nothing leſs than univerſal Righteouſneſs and Holineſs, or ſincere Endeavours after it, which are inconſiſtent with the Love of any known Sin, will come up to theſe Conditions which our SAVIOUR has required. And this will exclude great Numbers, who paſs for very good Men,

and

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and are ſo in ſome Reſpects, but are really very bad in others.

MANY think to ſupply the want of Virtue by Faith, and atone for a wicked Life by a right Belief. But the Apoſtle bids us, *Add to our Faith Virtue*; and aſſures us, That *Faith without Works*, i. e. without a good Life, *is dead*, and will do us no good. And 'tis to be obſerved, That the Difficulties of entring, conſiſt not at all in Belief, but in Practice. For Chriſtianity, however ſome have endeavoured to perplex and confound it, is very plain and intelligible, as far as it is neceſſary to be underſtood in order to our Salvation. In this Reſpect it lies level to Men of the meaneſt Capacities, and was deſigned for ſuch, as well as for the Wiſe and Learned. And therefore there can be no Difficulty here; This lies wholly in the Practice, in Obeying the Laws of the Goſpel, and obſerving thoſe Rules which are laid down for the Government of our Lives and Actions.

ACCORDINGLY in all thoſe Places where our SAVIOUR mentions the laſt Judgment, and deſcribes His Way of Proceeding in that Great Day; the Sentence

tence every where follows doing, or not doing; without any mention of believing, or not believing. Not that any to whom the Goſpel hath been preached, ſhall be ſaved without believing JESUS to be the *Meſſiah*, and aſſenting to all thoſe Truths which He has revealed. But, as I ſaid, the Difficulty lies not here: Becauſe all Things neceſſary to be believed, are, for that very Reaſon, eaſy to be underſtood, though all Things neceſſary to be done are not ſo eaſy to be practiced. SERM. XIII.

BUT how difficult ſoever they may be, we cannot be excuſed from them upon any Account. Heaven and Earth ſhall paſs away, before one Jot or Tittle of the moral Law ſhall fail or ceaſe to be of Force.

SO that we may enlarge our *Creed* as much as we pleaſe, and be as unreaſonable as we will in our Belief; This will not reduce our Obligation to Practice, or excuſe us in any one ſingle Inſtance of Piety and a good Life.

AND therefore They alſo ſeek to enter and ſhall not be able, who think to be ſaved by the bare Profeſſion of any particular Religion, or by being

SERM. XIII. Members of any particular Church. "For * no Church hath that Privi-
"ledge, to ſave a Man upon any other
"Terms than thoſe which our SAVI-
"OUR has declared in His Goſpel;
"And all Religions are equal in this
"Reſpect, that a bad Man, as long
"as he continues bad, cannot be be-
"nefited or ſaved by any of Them."
Our being of the beſt Religion in the World, will ſignify nothing without an anſwerable Life; and it will be to no Purpoſe that we have found out and profeſſed the Truth that is according to Godlineſs, if we do not practice it.

IN a word, nothing will avail us that does not mend us, and make us really better; that does not mortify and kill all Vices in us, and eſtabliſh us in the Habit of Univerſal Purity and Holineſs. If we miſs of This, or miſtake any Thing elſe for it; however we may delude and pleaſe ourſelves at preſent, we ſhall find our Error at laſt, and be of the Number of thoſe who

* *Tillotſon*'s Poſthumous Sermons, Vol. I. p. 213.

who *ſeek to enter, and ſhall not be able.* SERM. XIII.

III. I PROCEED now to the Third Thing I propoſed; which was to vindicate the Divine *Goodneſs* and *Juſtice* in this Particular, in making theſe the Terms and Conditions of Salvation.

FOR 'tis natural to object, that though the Gate is not ſo ſtrait but Men may enter if they will apply themſelves to this Buſineſs with due Care and Labour, and make uſe of thoſe Means which GOD has put in their Power; that though it ſhould be granted, as I think cannot be denied, that Piety and Virtue even in this corrupt and degenerate State, are not ſo diſagreeable, much leſs contrary to our Nature, but that by a right Uſe and Improvement of our Faculties, we may make them eaſy and familiar to us; yet ſince the Caſe is ſo, that but a few, very few in Compariſon, will enter in at the ſtrait Gate; the Flock will ſtill be but little (as our SAVIOUR calls it, *Luke* xii. 32.) which ſhall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven;

SERM. XIII. and Men will go in Throngs the broad Way, that leads to Deſtruction.

WHY did GOD make the Terms of Salvation ſuch, as, though not impoſſible, nor extreamly difficult, yet are ſo difficult that but a ſmall Part of Mankind will fulfill? How is it reconcileable with His Goodneſs, to tie up His Creatures to ſuch Conditions of Happineſs, as he knows the greateſt Part of them will never perform? Or, in other Words, why did He create ſo many People who will be miſerable? Why did He give Being to thoſe who, could they have foreſeen, as He did, what would happen, would not have accepted it, but have choſen never to have been?

IN Anſwer to this Objection, let it be conſidered.

1. THAT, at this Rate, GOD muſt have made no ſuch Creatures as free Agents at all, at leaſt none in that Rank and Degree wherein Men are placed. If GOD was obliged to prevent all the Evil and Miſchief that ſhall happen in the World, He muſt never have made ſuch a Place as this World is; For Sin and all the ſad Effects

fects of it, whether temporal or eter- SERM. nal, are no other than the natural Con- XIII. ſequence of that Liberty or Freedom with which Creatures are endued; and without which, as there would be no Vice, ſo neither could there be any Virtue, nor any Room for Rewards and Puniſhments.

THERE *is none good, but one, that is* GOD; none perfectly ſo, and without a Poſſibility of the contrary, but He. All Creatures, as ſuch, are capable of tranſgreſſing the Law of their Creation. Thus the Angels kept not their firſt Eſtate, but fell. Thus *Adam* ſinned, and his Poſterity have trod in his Steps. And all this, by the Abuſe of that Liberty which was eſſential to their Natures, and without which they could not have been free Agents.

GOD therefore ſtands perfectly free from the Blood of all Men, and cannot be charged with the Miſery or Ruin of any of His Creatures. All this lies at their own Door, and is the Effect of their own free and fooliſh Choice. More particularly with Regard to Men, GOD has done all that 'tis fit and reaſonable, and even poſſi-

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ble for Him to do, conſiſtently with the Freedom of their Natures, to make them virtuous and happy. He has, eſpecially under the Goſpel, furniſhed us to this End with every Thing that is proper to work upon reaſonable Creatures, and prevail with them to purſue their own Intereſt; and, if, after all this, Men do and will miſcarry, their Deſtruction is plainly from themſelves, and their Miſery is of their own making. If GOD ſhould go on further, and over-rule their natural Powers, and even force them againſt their Wills to come into His Meaſures; This would deſtroy their Natures, and turn them into Stocks and Stones; Which, though it might prevent their Miſery, would neceſſarily deprive them of all their Happineſs. But,

2. THIS Condition of Univerſal Holineſs, in order to our Admittance; is highly becoming the MAJESTY of Heaven, and ſuch as GOD's infinite Purity and Holineſs requires.

FOR how unworthy Notions muſt Men have of GOD, to think that He will admit wicked Men Members of His Kingdom? that *He who is of purer*

purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, ſhould take Pleaſure in the Workers of Wickedneſs, and reward them with eternal Happineſs? He will indeed ſhow Mercy upon Thouſands, and make all favourable Allowances for the hard and unhappy Circumſtances which any have been under; He knows whereof we are made, and will abundantly pardon our Frailties and Imperfections, if we be honeſt and ſincere. But as for wilful and obſtinate Impiety, and them that offend of malicious Wickedneſs; this is a Caſe which is not capable of Mercy; and ſuch as theſe, He will not, and cannot conſiſtently with the Honour of His Laws and the Authority of His Government, paſs by and pardon; but muſt ſet ſome Mark of Diſpleaſure upon them, and exclude them for ever from His Preſence. SERM. XIII.

THOUGH the Glory and Strength of Earthly Kingdoms conſiſts in the Multitude of Subjects, yet even here we are told, that *Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation*, and that *Sin is a Reproach to any People*. Much more muſt this be thought true of GOD's Kingdom, which is a Kingdom of Righteouſneſs, and Proverbs xiv. 34.

SERM. XIII. whoſe Throne is eſtabliſhed in Juſtice and Judgment.

THE Glory of GOD's Kingdom conſiſts not barely in the Multitude of His Subjects, which He who is All-ſufficient has no Need of; but in their reall Goodneſs and true Holineſs, in their Likeneſs and Reſemblance of Him, and their inward Conformity to his Divine Nature and Perfections.

THE Deſign of all GOD's Dealings and Tranſactions with the Children of Men, is to make them Good and Virtuous, to plant univerſal Righteouſneſs and Holineſs in the Earth. This is the great End He has been carrying on in the World, ever ſince He made it. And to this Purpoſe He has afforded us all neceſſary Helps, and reaſonable Encouragements. He has given us ſufficient Warning againſt the Danger of Sin, and the fatal End and Iſſue of a wicked Life; And has ſet before us exceeding great and precious Promiſes, to excite us to be Good, and to lay hold on Eternal Life. So that both His Juſtice and His Mercy ſtand perfectly free of all Imputation.

SAY *not thou therefore*, as the Wiſe Man cautions us, *It is through the* LORD

that

that I fell away; for thou oughteſt not to do the Things that he hateth. Say not thou, He hath cauſed me to err: for He hath no need of the ſinful Man. The LORD *hateth all Abomination; and they that fear* GOD, *love it not. He himſelf made Man from the Beginning, and left him in the Hand of his Counſel: If thou wilt, to keep the Commandments, and to perform acceptable Faithfulneſs. He hath ſet Fire and Water before thee: ſtretch forth thy Hand unto whither thou wilt. Before Man is Life and Death, and whether him liketh ſhall be given him.* SERM. XIII.

GOD *hath no need of the ſinful Man*, He wants not ſuch to increaſe His Kingdom. And if Men will not now comply with His Laws, and come into that Deſign which He is carrying on of eſtabliſhing univerſal Righteouſneſs in the World; he will, at the End of the World, fully accompliſh his Intentions, when *He will take his Fan into his Hand, and thoroughly purge his Floor, and gather the Wheat into his Garner, and burn the Chaff with unquenchable Fire.*

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HE will then make a wide Diſtinction between the Wicked and the Good, and ſeparate to Himſelf (how ſmall ſoever the Number be) *a holy Nation, a royal Prieſthood, a peculiar People, zealous of good Works.* He will then erect to Himſelf a Glorious and Eternal Kingdom, wherein dwelleth Righteouſneſs, and into which nothing that is impure or unclean, nothing unholy or prophane ſhall ever enter. Which brings me

3*dly*, TO another Conſideration that will vindicate the Divine Proceedings in this Matter, which is This:

THAT the Condition of univerſal Righteouſneſs and Holineſs, as it is in itſelf juſt and reaſonable, ſo is it in the Nature of the Thing abſolutely neceſſary.

WITHOUT *Holineſs no Man can ſee the* LORD. The Preſence of GOD Himſelf, who is the Fountain of Happineſs, would not make a wicked Man happy, could we ſuppoſe him admitted into it. The Pleaſures of Heaven are of a refined and ſpiritual Nature, and would be taſteleſs and inſipid to carnal and corrupted Appetites. Men of vicious Tempers, and ſenſual Inclinations, can

can neither diſcern the Beauty, nor reliſh the Enjoyments of that Place. 'Till we have, in ſome Meaſure, ſubdued our Corruptions, and worked ourſelves up to an inward Likeneſs and Agreement with the Nature of GOD, and the Bleſſed Spirits Above; all the Joys and Glories of Heaven will be no more to us, than Sounds to the Deaf, or Colours to the Blind. We ſhall have no Taſte of them, nor be much affected by them; amidſt all the Plenty and Treaſures of that Place, we ſhall be unable to find any ſuitable or agreeable Entertainment. SERM. XIII.

IF we be wedded to this World, and give up ourſelves entirely to ſenſual Pleaſures and Enjoyments; if we make it our Study to indulge the Body, and gratify every Appetite and Inclination in every Thing which they call for: We ſhall, by this Means, incarnate our Souls, and even ſenſualize our Spirits. And what then will become of us, or what Employment ſhall we find, when we go hence, and leave the Body and this World behind us? when we lanch into Eternity, and exchange theſe groſs material

SERM. XIII. terial Things for thoſe that are ſpiritual and inviſible?

FOR what Pleaſure will the voluptuous Epicure, whoſe God is his Belly, find, where there are no ſenſual Entertainments? When, though at preſent indeed, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *The Belly is for Meats, and Meats for the Belly*; yet GOD *ſhall deſtroy both it and them*: When the Fruits that his Soul luſted after, are departed from him; and all Things which were dainty and goodly are departed from him, and he ſhall find them no more at all, *Rev.* xviii. 14.

WHAT Satisfaction will the covetous Worldling reap from the Treaſures Above, whoſe Heart is ſet upon this World's Wealth, and who has all along made Silver his Truſt, and fine Gold his Confidence?

WHAT will the Ambitious Perſon meet with there to gratify his Vanity, who has never ſtudied to recommend himſelf to his MAKER, but loved the Praiſe of Men more than the Praiſe of GOD, and has already had all his Reward? Or what ſhould the Envious and Malicious, the Proud and Contentious do there, where all is perfect Harmony and

and Concord, trueſt Love, and abſolute Good-will? SERM. XIII.

THUS does all Vice and Wickedneſs naturally indiſpoſe us for Heaven, and hinder our Happineſs, by leaving ſuch longing Deſires in our Minds, as there are no Objects There to ſatisfy; but are directly oppoſite to every Thing we ſhall then meet with, to all thoſe ſpiritual Joys and rational Pleaſures which GOD has prepared for them that Love Him.

FOR a vicious Courſe of Life has a much more malignant Influence upon the Mind than upon the Body; and leaves ſuch ſtrong and laſting Impreſſions behind it, as neither Age, nor Sickneſs, nor Death itſelf can wear out; and ſo a Foundation is laid for our future Miſery and Ruin.

INSTANCES of this Kind are not uncommon; of Men, who through Age or bodily Infirmity are forced to forſake their former Extravagancies, and yet retain a ſtrange Liking and Affection for them, and can call them to Mind, and recount them to others, with a viſible Air of Pleaſure and Satisfaction. This ſhows the Mind itſelf to be deeply

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ly tainted and infected, and is of far worſe Conſequence than Rottenneſs to the Bones. For the vicious Appetites, and corrupt Inclinations which the Soul has contracted in the Body, it will retain and carry along with it into another World.

DEATH, though it makes a moſt amazing Change in the outward Man, and, in a Moment of Time, ſo diſfigures us, that our neareſt Friends know us not, but ſtand afraid, and ſtart at us; has yet no Power over the inner Man, no Effect or Influence upon our Souls, but leaves them in the ſame State and Condition they were in before. The ſame Affections and Inclinations, the ſame Habits and Diſpoſitions, which they have at their Separation from the Body; will cleave to them ſtill, and accompany them into another State, and be the Occaſion either of their Happineſs or Miſery. This is intimated in that Paſſage, *Rev.* xxii. 11. *He that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous ſtill; and he that is holy, let him be holy ſtill.*

AND

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AND ſo indeed it will be. Death, which is nothing but the Separation of the Soul from the Body, will not make any Alteration in us, as to the main State and Condition of our Souls; but ſuch as it finds them, ſuch will it leave them; and ſuch muſt they continue to be, to all Eternity.

SO that GOD by excluding wicked Men from Heaven, and making univerſal Holineſs a neceſſary Condition of our future Happineſs, has not only done what was becoming his Infinite MAJESTY, and kept to the Rules of Juſtice and Mercy; but has moreover acted agreeably to the eternal Reaſon and immutable Nature of Things.

IV. I COME now in the *Fourth* and *Laſt* Place, To make ſome uſeful Obſervations and Inferences from the whole.

1. FROM what has been ſaid concerning the ſmall Number of thoſe who ſhall be ſaved, we may learn how falſe and fallacious that Argument is, which is drawn from this Circumſtance of Numbers; and how far it is from a Proof that any Party is in the Right, becauſe

SERM. XIII. becauſe there are great Multitudes engaged in it.

AND yet this is one of thoſe Arguments whereby the Church of *Rome* would prove herſelf to be the true Church, becauſe there are greater Numbers in her Communion than in any other.

NOW though the Truth of the Matter of Fact might juſtly be called in Queſtion; yet, ſuppoſing the Caſe were really ſo, what Argument is this that they are in the right?

WHICH was the true Church of GOD, when the Wickedneſs of Man was ſo great in the Earth, that it provoked the LORD to deſtroy all Fleſh, and the whole World periſhed except Eight Perſons?

OR, what ſhall we think of the Church in *Abraham*'s Time, when, for ought appears to the contrary, it was confined to one ſingle Family, and the ſmall Kingdom of *Melchiſedeck* King of *Salem*?

OR what ſhall we ſay to the Matter in *Moſes*'s Time, when the Church was confined to one only People, the People of *Iſrael* wandring in the Wilderneſs?

OR,

OR, to come a little nearer; What was the Caſe in *Elijah*'s Time, when he thought himſelf left *alone*, and they ſought *His* Life? Or in our Bleſſed SAVIOUR's Time, when the whole Chriſtian Church conſiſted of Twelve Apoſtles and Seventy Diſciples, and ſome few Followers beſides? A Number ſo ſmall, that we find our SAVIOUR thus addreſſing Himſelf to them by way of Comfort, *Luke* xii. 32. *Fear not, little Flock, for 'tis your Father's Good Pleaſure to give you the Kingdom.* The Kingdom of Heaven was reſerved for that little Flock; when there were great Multitudes of Wicked Men and Unbelievers, who ſhould ſeek to enter, and not be able. SERM. XIII.

AND ſo it will be found to be in that Day, when, as the Prophet expreſſes it, *Mal.* iii. 17. GOD *makes up His Jewels.* I ſay it will then appear, that Numbers are no Mark of Truth and Virtue, nor any Security from Sin and Error. For the Many will be ſeen to have erred from the right Way, and the Few to have found that narrow Path which leadeth unto Life. So our SAVIOUR has expreſsly told us, in the

SERM. XIII. Place parallel to the *Text*, Matth. vii. 13, 14. *Enter ye in at the ſtrait Gate; for wide is the Gate and broad is the Way that leadeth to Deſtruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Becauſe ſtrait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way that leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it.*

WHAT Proportion there will be between theſe two, and how much the one will exceed the other, our SAVIOUR has not told us. This is that vain Curioſity, which he rebuked in the Perſon that asked this Queſtion, by returning him no direct Anſwer. But, to quicken our Diligence, and excite our Care, He has directly told us, that there will be many of the one, and but few of the other.

2. FROM the many that will ſeek to enter, and not be able; we ſhould learn not to be tempted to Sin, becauſe 'tis the prevailing Cuſtom of the Age we live in, and there will be many that will bear us Company: For this will neither excuſe our Sin, nor leſſen our Puniſhment.

PRECEDENT can never change the Nature of Things; nor will publick Vogue

Vogue ever be able to juſtify Wickedneſs, and carry it againſt GOD. So that, notwithſtanding the Multitude of Offenders, every Man muſt bear his own Burthen, and undergo his own Puniſhment. SERM. XIII.

AND when we come before the great Tribunal, 'twill be in vain to plead, that we have done nothing elſe but what the reſt of the World have; For neither the Number nor the Quality of thoſe Perſons we have followed, will avail us any Thing or protect us from Puniſhment. 'Tis abſurd to imagine, that becauſe Men go to Hell in Throngs, they ſhall be Conquerors inſtead of Sufferers, or that any Numbers can prevail againſt the LORD of Hoſts.

THESE Things can never change the Courſe of Nature, or force the ALMIGHTY to alter His Opinion, repeal His Laws, or revoke His Threatnings. No; Folly will be Folly ſtill, let who will, and how many ſoever be the Patrons; And Sin will everlaſtingly be Sin, in Spite of Multitude, Faſhion, Cuſtom, or Example. And therefore whenever we are thus tempted, when-

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SERM. XIII. ever we ſee great Numbers of Men engaged in wicked Courſes, and we are enticed and encouraged to Sin by their Example; let us call to Mind, and reflect upon what our SAVIOUR has here told us, that there are but few that go the righs Way, and tread in thoſe Paths which lead to Life; but that the broad Way which leads to Deſtruction is filled and thronged, and many there be that go therein. Let us, I ſay, but reflect upon this; and the great Numbers of Sinners will be ſo far from being any Inducement to us to caſt in our Lot among them, that it will fright us from following them, and prove the moſt powerful Preſervative againſt their Infection.

3. FROM what has been ſaid concerning the Straitneſs of the Gate, and the Narrowneſs of the Way that leads unto Life, together with the Difficulties of Entring: It fully appears how unreaſonable it is to make the Gate yet ſtraiter, and the Way ſtill narrower, by impoſing more and other Terms of Salvation than what the Goſpel has required; by adding to the Scriptures, the only Rule of our Faith and Practice,

tice, oral Tradition, human Fancies and Inventions, and *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*; and binding them upon the Conſcience together, under the equal Penalty of Death and Damnation. SERM. XIII.

THIS, I ſay, is to make, as much as in us lies, the Gate yet ſtraiter, and the Way ſtill narrower which leads to Life, than GOD Himſelf has made it. And yet this has been too often practiced, to the great Diſturbance of the common Peace of Chriſtendom, and the Quiet of the Minds of particular Perſons. Whole Churches and Nations have excommunicated each other for mere Trifles; and People of the ſame Church and Nation have fallen as foul upon one another for Matters wherein Piety and a good Life are no ways concerned, and which for that Reaſon can neither hinder nor help forward their Salvation. But in all ſuch Caſes our Comfort is, that the Terms of Salvation are fixed by CHRIST Himſelf; ſo that though Men may affect to be called Maſters, we have no Maſter but Him only, and it is a ſmall Thing with us to be judged of Man's Judg-

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ment. If we receive CHRIST for our Lord, and obey thoſe Laws which He has given us; If we believe the Scriptures to be the Word of GOD, and uſe our beſt Endeavours to underſtand that Word, and to keep thoſe Things which are written therein; our Condition is ſafe, whatever hard and uncharitable Sentence vain Men may pronounce upon it. For thus the Word of Truth itſelf has told us, *Rev.* xxii. 12, *&c. Behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give every Man as his Work ſhall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Firſt and the Laſt. Bleſſed are they that do His Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the Gates into the City.*

ROMANS viii. 6.

For, to be carnally minded, is Death: But to be ſpiritually minded, is Life and Peace.

THERE are in every Man two different Principles of Action, which draw him different Ways. Theſe, tho' there be other Appellations given them in Scripture, are moſt commonly ſtiled, eſpecially in St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles, by the different Names of *Fleſh* and *Spirit*. SERM. XIV.

BY the firſt, we are to underſtand all thoſe vicious and irregular Appetites, Inclinations, and Habitudes, whereby

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we are turned from our Obedience to that Eternal Law of Right, the Obſervance whereof GOD always requires and is pleaſed with. This is very properly called Fleſh; becauſe this bodily State is the Source from which all our Deviations from the ſtrait Rule of Rectitude do, for the moſt Part, take their Riſe, or ultimately terminate in it.

BY the ſecond, is meant that Part of us which partakes of the Divine Nature; which is endued with Light from GOD, to know and ſee what is righteous, juſt, and good; and which, being conſulted, and hearkened to, is always ready to direct and prompt us to that which is good. And This is very fitly ſtiled Spirit, as it implies a great Degree of Purity and Perfection, and a Freedom from corporeal Impreſſions, and corrupt Inclinations.

BY the one, is ſignified that Principle which inclines and carries Men to Ill: By the other, that Principle which dictates what is right, and inclines to Good. To cultivate and improve the latter, and make it prevail over the former; that the Spirit might rule and govern the Fleſh, and the

Dictates

Dictates of right Reaſon overcome the Irregularities of our ſenſual Appetites; was the great End of the Philoſophy of the *Gentiles*; but an End which it could never attain; For through prevailing Cuſtom and contrary Habits, this ſpiritual Principle was very much weakened, and almoſt extinct in the *Gentiles*, and they had no Hopes of reſtoring it to its original Life and Power. SERM. XIV.

THIS too was the Deſign of the Religion of the *Jews*, but a Deſign which it could not accompliſh: For the Law of *Moſes* was too weak, to deliver thoſe that were under it from their carnal ſinful Appetites, and the Prevalence of them.

BOTH theſe Points the Apoſtle proves at large in the preceeding Parts of this Epiſtle: The Inſufficiency, both of the Light of Nature, and the Law of *Moſes*, to free Men from the Power and Puniſhment of Sin: And ſhows that the *Gentiles*, who were not under the Law, were ſaved only by Grace; which required that they ſhould not indulge themſelves in Sin, but ſteadily and ſincerely endeavour after perfect Obedience: And that the *Jews*, who were under

SERM. XIV. under the Law, were alſo ſaved by Grace only; becauſe the Law could not enable them wholly to avoid Sin, which, by the Law, was in every the leaſt Slip made Death.

THE Apoſtle having ſhown this; proceeds in this Chapter to ſet forth the Advantages of the GOSPEL, by ſhowing that both *Jews* and *Gentiles* who are under Grace, *i. e.* Converts to Chriſtianity, are free from Condemnation, if they perform what is required of them; And thereupon he lays down the Terms of the Covenant of Grace, and preſſes the Obſervances of thoſe Terms, not to live after the Fleſh, but after the Spirit; And the *Text* contains a Reaſon why this Deliverance from Condemnation is to ſuch Chriſtian Converts only, *who walk not after the Fleſh, but after the Spirit*; And this Reaſon is taken from the natural Effects and Conſequences of theſe different Principles. *For, to be carnally minded, is Death: but to be ſpiritually minded, is Life and Peace.*

IN ſpeaking further to theſe Words, I ſhall,

I. BRIEFLY

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I. BRIEFLY deſcribe theſe two different States, of the Carnal and Spiritual Mind.

II. I ſhall conſider the different Ends of theſe two different States, as they are here ſet down by the Apoſtle; the one to be *Death*, and the other *Life and Peace*.

III. I SHALL enquire, How we may know which of theſe two is our State and Condition, Whether we be *Carnally* or *Spiritually Minded*.

IV. I SHALL endeavour to perſuade you to diveſt yourſelves of the carnal State of Mind, and to labour after that ſpiritual Mindedneſs, which the Apoſtle here recommends to us.

I. I AM briefly to deſcribe theſe two different *States*, of the Carnal and Spiritual Mind.

THE Apoſtle tells us in the Verſe before the *Text*, that *they that are after the Fleſh*, *i. e.* carnally Minded, *do mind the Things of the Fleſh*. By which we

are

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are not to understand only that which we commonly call sensual Pleasure, in the grossest Acceptation of that Word; nor yet only such Things as are absolutely evil, and are properly called the Lusts of the Flesh, of which the Apostle has given us a long List, *Gal.* v. 19, *&c.* but such Things also as are occasionally evil, and become sinful by our immoderate Pursuit and Enjoyment of them; such as the Riches, Honours, and Pleasures of this World. These also are called the Things of the Flesh; and are such as carnal Persons most mind, most highly savour and affect, and take the greatest Pleasure and Delight in.

So that we are then carnally minded, when we are under the Direction of the Flesh, and its sinful Appetites: When we are under the Law in our Members, and have the Thoughts of our Hearts, and the Bent of our Minds set upon the Satisfaction of the Lusts of the Flesh, and the Accomplishment of our worldly Projects and Designs: When we walk by Sight, and are governed by Sense, and by the Hopes of getting and by the Fears of losing

ſing the Things that are ſeen and are temporal: When we give ourſelves up to an eager Proſecution of the World, and the Things that are in the World: And lay it down as a ſettled Maxim, as the governing Principle of our Lives, to take our Eaſe and Pleaſure, to gratify ourſelves in every Thing which this World preſents us with; to raiſe our Reputation and our Fortune, and be as rich, and great, and happy as we can be here, without any Regard to another State or another Intereſt, or any Reliſh for Spiritual Things, for the preſent Pleaſures and Satisfactions of Religion and Virtue, or the future and inviſible Rewards which are promiſed to ſuch Courſes.

WHEN our Minds are filled and taken up with ſuch ſenſual worldly Thoughts and Affections, ſuch earthly Projects and Deſigns as theſe; when our Soul cleaveth to the Duſt, and is ſet upon ſuch mean and low Views as theſe; Then we are in a carnal State of Mind.

NOW a ſpiritual State is the Reverſe of all this. So the Apoſtle tells us, that *they who are after the Spirit, do mind the Things of the Spirit.*

They

SERM. XIV. They are under the Law of their Minds, and are governed by the Dictates of Reason, and not the blind Suggestions of Sense. This teaches them another Lesson, and puts them upon other Projects and Designs: The Perfecting their better Part, by improving themselves in all Knowledge and Virtue: The Raising and Exalting of their Natures to a Likeness with the Divine, by complying with the Motions of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT.

THEY savour the Things of the Spirit, find a Sweetness and Excellency in them; so that the Bent of their Hearts, and Inclination of their Minds are towards them; and they set themselves seriously and sincerely to obey the Directions of this Divine Principle.

THIS gives them, though not a Distaste, yet a lower Relish for these sensible Things; so that they are never ensnared or captivated by them, but can see through all the glittering Pomp of this World, and set their Affections upon another; and amidst the greatest Affluence of these Things below, they are still aspiring after the Things above; and find a more exquisite Pleasure in the

the Practice of Piety and Virtue, and the Proſpect of their future Reward, than in any of their worldly Poſſeſſions or Expectations. This is to be ſpiritually minded. SERM. XIV.

I PROCEED now in the

II. PLACE, to conſider the different *Ends* of theſe two different States, as they are here ſet down by the Apoſtle, the one to be *Death*, the other to be *Life and Peace*.

AND *1ſt*, of the carnal State of Mind; which Apoſtle tells us, *is Death*.

TO cultivate and improve, to pleaſe and gratify only our baſer Part, which is the Subject of Mortality, and contains in it the Seeds of Corruption; muſt neceſſarily tend to and end in Death.

THIS is what the Apoſtle elſewhere ſtiles *ſowing to the Fleſh*, i. e. ſtudying nothing elſe but bodily Neceſſities, Conveniences, and Pleaſures; and tells us, that *he that ſoweth to the Fleſh, ſhall, of the Fleſh, reap Corruption*. He will at the Time of the Harveſt, *i. e.* in another Life, find the Product of Gal. vi. 8.

ſuch

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such Husbandry to be Corruption and Periſhing. Nothing that is laſting and incorruptible, can ſpring from ſuch periſhing and corruptible Seed.

THAT *which is born of the Fleſh, is Fleſh; and Fleſh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of* GOD: Such fleeting corruptible Things as our preſent Bodies, are not fitted for a State of immutable Incorruptibility. And therefore they who take no Care of any other Part but That, have barely an animal Life and Conſtitution, which will of Courſe ſoon diſſolve, and come to an End. *As is the earthy, ſo are they alſo that are earthy*; They have no higher Extraction than from the earthy Man, whoſe End is Corruption; and as they are carnally minded, and take Care of no other Intereſt but that of this World, ſo they muſt needs have all their Happineſs terminate in Death, which puts a final Period to thoſe Things which they have made their chief Study and Delight.

So that they can have no Part in the Reſurrection of the Juſt, nor any Reliſh and Enjoyment of that Happineſs which remains after the Grave; which

which being of a different Nature from any which they had in this Life, they were dead to it even in this Life, and will not be reſtored to it in another. The Apoſtle pronounces thoſe who are wanton, and indulge themſelves in Pleaſures, to be *dead while they live*, 1 Tim. v. 6. dead in a moral and ſpiritual Senſe, dead to divine and heavenly Things, to their chief Happineſs and the great End of their Being. And as they are thus dead in this Life, ſo they muſt for ever remain ſo in another. SERM. XIV.

THIS then is the leaſt which can be meant by that Death, which carnal Mindedneſs will end in; that it will leave us in the State of the Dead, ſtripped of all our preſent Pleaſures and Enjoyments, and deſtitute of any other.

BUT this is the leaſt indeed; For the Scriptures make mention of a Second Death. *He that overcometh, ſhall not be hurt of the Second Death.* This is a judicial Death; and by it we are to underſtand that Eternal State of Puniſhment, which GOD has prepared for the Wicked in another World. It is not only a Privation of all Happineſs, but a State of poſitive Miſery and Rev. ii. 11.

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Torment. For they that die that Death, ſhall be hurt by it. This the Words now cited plainly intimate. Whereas, if it was Annihilation, and ſo a Concluſion of their Torments, it would no way hurt or injure thoſe to whom theſe Words are directed, but be highly beneficial to them. This Death too, is what a carnal Mind will end in, and the Wages with which Sin will reward thoſe who have been its Slaves and Vaſſals. *For the Wages of Sin is Death*, Rom. vi. 21. But let us ſee

2. THE Effects of being *ſpiritually minded*. And theſe are as contrary to thoſe I have already mentioned, as the Principle from whence they flow. *To be ſpiritually minded, is Life and Peace.*

BY hearkening to right Reaſon, and following the Dictates of our Minds and Conſciences, eſpecially as they are enlightened and aſſiſted by the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD; we ſhall be led into ſuch Courſes as will always be pleaſant to us, and prove a never-failing Spring of inward Peace and Contentment, of Joy and Gladneſs of Heart,

Heart, more than when our Corn, and Wine, and Oil encreaſe; greater than any External Bleſſings and Acquiſitions can yield us. SERM. XIV.

THE Ways of Sin are rugged and uneven; and every Man that is carnally minded, and gives himſelf up to his bodily Appetites and Paſſions, is ſenſible of a Thorn in the Fleſh, and is often buffeted by his own beloved Luſts and Pleaſures. There is a ſecret Sting in all his vicious Enjoyments, and a ſad Heavineſs in all his Mirth. In the Midſt of Laughter his Heart is ſorrowful, and many miſgiving Thoughts attend him in all his Extravagance and Exceſs. But nothing like this accompanies the Practice of true Religion, and Virtue; Their *Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all* their *Paths are Peace.*

OBEYING the Rules of Reaſon, and complying with the Motions of GOD's SPIRIT; withdrawing our Affections from Things below, and ſetting them on Things above; Subduing our Luſts and Paſſions, and improving our Graces and Virtues; Crucifying the Fleſh with the Luſts and Affections thereof, that

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Sin ſhould no longer reign in our mortal Bodies, and that we ſhould no longer obey it: And inſtead of this, walking after the SPIRIT, and following its Guidance and Direction; Obeying the Dictates of right Reaſon, and the Suggeſtions of Conſcience inſtructed and informed aright by the ſure and infallible Word of GOD: This will naturally produce Peace and Quiet of Mind, maintain a conſtant Calm and Repoſe in our Breaſts, and exclude all miſgiving Thoughts and uneaſy Fears. This too will keep our Souls alive, and in a State of Health and Vigour, and fit them for that Happineſs which they are deſigned for in another Life. When we are thus ſpiritually minded, we ſhall not only enjoy all the Happineſs which rational Beings are capable of in this Life, but ſhall enter upon our new and heavenly State with all the Advantages imaginable, with ſuch Habits and Diſpoſitions of Soul, ſuch Paſſions and Affections, ſuch a Frame and Temper of Mind, as will give us a true Taſte and Reliſh of the Joys above, and make us for ever happy in thoſe Things

Things which GOD has prepared for them that love Him. SERM. XIV.

THUS will ſpiritual Mindedneſs produce Life and Peace; and They that *ſow to the Spirit, ſhall, of the Spirit, reap Life everlaſting.*

THESE being the different Ends of the carnal and ſpiritual State of Mind; eternal Death and Miſery being the Conſequence of the one, and everlaſting Life and Happineſs the Effect of the other; it muſt needs concern us very much to *know,*

III. WHICH of theſe two States is our Condition, whether we be carnally or ſpiritually minded. Which was the *Third* Thing to be enquired.

AND This we may certainly *know* by a diligent Obſervation of ourſelves, and an impartial Search into the inward Frame and Bent of our Hearts, and the outward Courſe and Tenor of our Lives. Other People may eaſily miſtake us, but we cannot ſo eaſily miſtake ourſelves. *For,* as the Wiſe Man tells us, *the Heart knoweth his own Bitterneſs; and a Stranger doth not intermeddle with his Joy*; i. e. the Prov. xiv. 10.

SERM. XIV. inward State of a Man is better known by his own Self-conſciouſneſs, than by the Conjecture of others. If we take the Pains to examine ourſelves, we may ſoon know what it is which does moſt of all affect us, whether the Things of this World or another; whether the Intereſt of our Bodies or our Souls; the Buſineſs of the Life which now is, or the Concernments of that which is to come.

WE may eaſily feel which Way the Stream of our Paſſions and Affections runs; whether they move upwards, or downwards; what it is which we reliſh and ſavour, the Things that be of GOD, or the Things that be of Men; What it is which we moſt delight in, the Pleaſures of GOD's Houſe, the Beauty and Excellence of Holineſs and Virtue, or our worldly Employments and Diverſions: What prevails moſt over us, the Dictates of Reaſon and Religion; or the blind Impulſes of Senſe and Paſſion: Which we moſt conſult and hearken to, Fleſh and Blood, or the Suggeſtions of our own Minds and of the SPIRIT of GOD: And which we moſt prefer and of-

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teneſt chooſe; doing our Duty and diſ- SERM.
charging our Conſciences, or gratifying XIV.
our preſent Humour and Inclination.

By ſuch Obſervations as theſe, we may arrive at the Knowledge of ourſelves and our State and Condition. But then we are not to take an Eſtimate and make a Judgment of ourſelves and our Condition, of our being carnally or ſpiritually minded, from any ſingle tranſient Affection, any ſudden Paſſion or Motion of the Mind. For a worldly carnal Mind may, at ſome Times, and upon ſome Occaſions, have ſome raiſed and ſpiritual Thoughts: And the greateſt and moſt habitual Sinner has his Intermiſſions, his melancholy Moods, and Fits of Devotion. But as theſe were occaſioned by ſome ſudden Emergency, ſome unexpected Croſs and Diſappointment, and a conſequent Diſguſt; ſome Sickneſs, or Suffering, or other awakening Calamity; and not from any fixed and ſettled Principle: So they never laſt any longer, than that which firſt raiſed them continues; and when that is over, the Man returns again to his old Courſes, and his former Practices, like the Dog

SERM. XIV. to his Vomit, and the Sow that was waſhed to her wallowing in the Mire.

ON the contrary, the beſt and moſt ſpiritual Minds, the moſt exalted and raiſed Affections, have their Ebbs and Flows, their Riſings and Fallings. As long as we continue in this imperfect State, and are made up of Fleſh and Blood; there will be a perpetual Conteſt and Struggle between theſe two. *For*, as the Apoſtle tells us, *Gal.* v. 17. *the Fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the Fleſh; and theſe are contrary the one to the other, ſo that we do not* always *the Things that we would.* Yet, as the Apoſtle adds, *Ver.* 24. *They that are* CHRIST's, i. e. they that are led by the Spirit, or in the Words of the *Text* (for the Phraſes are ſynonymous, and the Places parallel) *They that are ſpiritually minded; have crucified the Fleſh with the Affections and Luſts.* Or, in thoſe Words, *Ver.* 15. *They have, through the Spirit, mortified the Deeds of the Body.*

AND therefore though the Fleſh will ſtruggle and rebell againſt the SPIRIT even in thoſe who are ſpiritually minded,

ed, yet it will not finally prevail, e- SERM.
ſpecially in great Inſtances. The Spiri- XIV.
tual Man may ſometimes be foiled through an Inadvertency and Surprize, and the Fleſh may get the Day in ſome particular little Skirmiſhes: But he will have the Advantage in the main State of the War; and though he ſometimes falls, he will not be long kept under, but will ſoon recover himſelf, and many Times gain Ground by his Falls; and the Spirit will have the better of the Fleſh at the Long-run, and go off with Victory. In ſuch a Man, the Spirit will be the Ruling Principle, and have the main Aſcendant over the Fleſh; ſo that he will not only perſevere in his Duty, but improve and go on unto Perfection, though with great Inequality of Temper at ſeveral Times, and with much Mixture of human Frailties, which will always ſtick to us while we continue in this World.

THE only certain Way therefore of knowing whether we are ſpiritually or carnally minded, is from a ſettled Habit, or fixed Principle abiding in us, which will diſcover itſelf in the general Courſe

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Courſe and Tenor of our Lives. The preſent Fruit and Product of theſe two Principles are as different as the Principles themſelves, and may eaſily be known and diſtinguiſhed from each other. This is the Rule which is laid down in the Verſe before the *Text*. *They that are after the Fleſh, do mind the Things of the Fleſh; but they that are after the Spirit, do mind the Things of the Spirit.* And the Things or the Works both of the Fleſh and of the Spirit, are ſet down at large in the Place already cited, *Gal.* v. 19, *&c.*

NOW though theſe inward Habits may be concealed and diſguiſed for a Time, they cannot long be hid. Every tempting Occaſion will make them manifeſt, and lay them open; ſo that it will evidently appear both to ourſelves and others, what Principle we are guided by, and what Temper we are of.

WHATEVER Luſt or Paſſion we are ſubject and enſlaved to; upon the approach of its proper Object, will make uſe of that Power which it has over us.

THUS when the covetous Worldling has an Opportunity of enriching himſelf, though by never ſuch unjuſt and indirect Means;

Means; he will not fail of cloſing with the Offer, and will make ſuch haſte to be rich, that he will leave his Honour and Conſcience behind him. The Man of Pleaſure will eaſily be drawn into a Debauch: And though when he is left to himſelf, he keeps within Bounds; yet when Sinners entice him, he will readily conſent. The Ambitious, in like manner, while he is without Hopes of raiſing himſelf, ſits down contented with his preſent Condition; but as ſoon as any Proſpect appears, immediately he engages, and runs any Hazard to raiſe his Reputation, and make himſelf the ſubject of Mens Talk and Admiration. SERM. XIV.

But the Man that is ſpiritually Minded, whoſe Heart is ſet upon divine and heavenly Things, whoſe Paſſions are under the Government of Reaſon, and his Will and Affections ſubject to the Dictates and Motions of GOD's Holy Spirit; though he is not deſtitute of natural Appetites and Paſſions, but has a Reliſh for Things agreeable, and a Diſtaſte for ſuch as are diſagreeable to Fleſh and Blood; yet he is never ſo poſſeſſed with worldly Projects, nor ſo intoxicated with ſenſual Enjoyments, as to neglect the Purſuit

of

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of his true Happineſs, much leſs to do any thing ſinful and unlawful for the Sake of any temporal Profit or Pleaſure.

THIS makes him eaſy both to himſelf and others, free from Emulation and Vain-glory, neither Provoking nor Envying others; and fills him with *the Fruits of the* SPIRIT, ſuch as *Love, Joy, Peace, Long-ſuffering, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, Faith, Meekneſs and Temperance.*

WHEREAS the carnal Mind, which is bent upon worldly Purſuits, and ſenſual Gratifications; will naturally abound in the Works of *the Fleſh*, in *Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Laſciviouſneſs, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulation, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Hereſies, Envyings, Murthers, Drunkenneſs, Revellings, and ſuch-like. Of the which*, as the Apoſtle adds, *I tell you before, as I have alſo told you in Time paſt, that they who do ſuch Things, ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of* GOD. But the ſpiritual State and Temper of Mind, and the Fruits which flow from it, have a natural Tendency to fit us for the Kingdom

dom of GOD, and will make us for ever happy when we arrive at that Place. SERM. XIV.

AND therefore I ſhall proceed in the

IV*th* PLACE, to endeavour to *perſuade* you to diveſt yourſelves of the carnal State of Mind, and to labour after that ſpiritual Mindedneſs which the Apoſtle here recommends to us.

AND 1. One Conſideration which ſhould induce us to this, is, becauſe this is the great Deſign of the Goſpel; and we fruſtrate the Grace of GOD, if the Goſpel has not this Effect upon us.

IT was not the Deſign of our SAVIOUR's Coming, to free us only from the poſitive Puniſhment of Sin, and to ſave us by putting us into an external Place of Happineſs, ſo as to leave us at Liberty in the mean Time to live as we liſt, and to follow our own Inclinations; but the great Deſign of his Coming, was to furniſh us with ſuch Motives and Conſiderations, and ſuch new Principles of Action, as ſhould excite and enable us to overcome the Corruptions of our Nature, to ſubdue the Body, and get above the World. This is the main End of the

Goſpel

SERM. XIV. Goſpel of CHRIST; to aſſiſt thoſe who embrace it, to get the better of that Principle from whence their vicious Inclinations and Actions ſpring, ſo as to extinguiſh the Force and Power wherewith it uſed to rule in them, and ſtill rules in thoſe who know not the Goſpel of CHRIST: And to reſtore that Principle in us, which inclines us to Good to its juſt Authority and Power over us, ſo that henceforth we ſhould be led and governed by it.

UPON this account it is, that we are ſo frequently exhorted to *be renewed in the Spirit of our Minds*; *to put off the old Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Luſts*; *and to put on the new Man, which after* GOD *is created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs*, Eph. iv. 22, *&c.* And Chriſtianity is repreſented to us under the Notion of a new Creation, and a ſecond Birth; and we are ſaid to be born again, and to be created again unto Good Works; With many more Expreſſions of the like Importance. All which denote that Change which is to be made in us, from a carnal to a ſpiritual State of Mind; from the

the Prevalence of Vice and Wickedneſs, to the Power of Godlineſs. SERM. XIV.

So that if Chriſtianity has not this Effect upon us, we have not yet learned CHRIST, and know nothing of the Goſpel as we ought to know. If we be ſtill in Love with the World, and in Purſuit of the Things of the World, obeying the Luſts of the Fleſh; we are ſtill in a carnal State: And though we have taken up the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, we have certainly dropped the Practice of it, and ſhall come ſhort of the Promiſes which it makes us.

2. To encourage us to endeavour after this ſpiritual State, I obſerve farther, that our SAVIOUR has not been ſo hard a Maſter, as to call us by his Goſpel to a greater Degree of Perfection than He has enabled us to arrive at; but has encreaſed our Power in proportion to the Work which He requires of us. For the Doctrine of the *New Teſtament* teaches us, that they who receive CHRIST by Faith, do with Him receive his Spirit, and its Aſſiſtance againſt the Fleſh. Accordingly, for the attaining of Salvation, St. *Paul* joyns together Belief of the Truth,

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Truth, and Sanctification of the Spirit, 2 *Theſſ.* ii. 13. And in moſt Places where the Word Spirit is uſed, it is not to be taken barely for the Spirit of our Minds, for our Reaſon and Underſtanding, but for the Spirit of our Minds renewed and ſtrengthned, enlightned and aſſiſted by the SPIRIT of GOD. Thus *Eph.* iii. 16. *That He would grant you according to the Riches of his Glory, to be ſtrengthned with Might by his Spirit in the inner Man.* And the ſame thing is meant by that Exhortation already referred to, that *we ſhould be renewed in the Spirit of our Minds.* And, to name no more, in the Verſes after my *Text* the Apoſtle tells us, That we who have truly received the Goſpel, have therewith received the Spirit of GOD. For, to as many as receive CHRIST, He gives Power to become the Sons of GOD; and to thoſe that are his Sons, GOD gives his SPIRIT. And if CHRIST be in us by his SPIRIT, the Body is dead as to all Activity to Sin, Sin no longer reigns in it; But our ſinful carnal Luſts are mortified; and in their ſtead the Spirit of our Minds liveth, *i. e.* is enlivened in order to Righteouſneſs, or living righteouſly

teouſly. But if the SPIRIT of GOD, who had Power to raiſe JESUS CHRIST from the Dead, dwell in us, as certainly it does; He that raiſed CHRIST from the Dead, is certainly able, and will, by His SPIRIT that dwells in us, enliven even our mortal Bodies; that Sin ſhall not have the ſole Power to rule there, but our Members may be made living Inſtruments of Righteouſneſs. SERM. XIV.

THIS is the Drift of the Apoſtle's Diſcourſe in the Ninth and following Verſes of this Chapter. From whence it appears, that Chriſtians are delivered from the Dominion of their carnal ſinful Luſts, by the SPIRIT of GOD that is given to them, and dwells in them as a new quickening Principle and Power, by which they are put into the State of a ſpiritual Life, wherein their Members are made capable of being made the Inſtruments of Righteouſneſs; if they pleaſe, as living Men, alive now to Righteouſneſs, ſo to employ them. To this inward Aſſiſtance the Apoſtle aſcribes his Deliverance from a carnal State of Mind, from the

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Power and Prevalency of his irregular and ſenſual Inclinations, in the *Seventh* Chapter of this Epiſtle. Where, after he had given us a lively Deſcription of Human Frailty and Weakneſs, of the ſtrong Inclination and Impulſe of his carnal Appetites: he cries out, *O wretched Man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the Body of this Death!* Ver. 24. And in the next Words, he acquaints us by what Means this Deliverance is wrought. *I thank God:* or, as the beſt Copies read it; *The Grace of God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord:* The Grace of GOD aſſiſting our ſincere Endeavours, and His Favour and Mercy in pardoning our Failings and Imperfections.

SO that we are wholly inexcuſable if we remain in a carnal State, and refuſe to make uſe of that Grace which is freely offered us in the Goſpel, to reſtore ourſelves to a ſpiritual State and Temper of Mind. The SPIRIT of GOD dwells and reſides in every true Chriſtian for this End: Inſomuch that the Apoſtle tells us, *Ver.* 9. of this

this Chapter, That *if any Man have not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of His:* He is no Chriſtian. As certain therefore as we believe in CHRIST, take Him for our Lord and Maſter, and make it our ſincere Endeavour to obey His Laws; ſo certain is it that we ſhall receive His SPIRIT to enable us to mortify the Deeds of the Body, and arrive at a new and heavenly and divine Life, the Life of GOD in CHRIST: That as in our SAVIOUR's Fleſh, Sin was condemned, executed, and perfectly extinct, and never had there any Life or Being; ſo, upon our ſincere Endeavours after Righteouſneſs, we ſhall be aſſiſted by the ſame SPIRIT to keep Sin under in our mortal Bodies, in Conformity to CHRIST. SERM. XIV.

BUT, 3. If we will not be perſuaded to diveſt ourſelves of this carnal State, and labour after a ſpiritual State of Mind, from the Neceſſity of it to anſwer the great Ends of Chriſtianity, and the Aſſiſtance we have to perform it: Let us ſee what will be the Conſequence of our neglecting to do this,

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and continuing ſtill in a carnal State. And This, as appears from what has been already ſaid, is no leſs than forfeiting GOD's Favour, and continuing for ever under His Diſpleaſure.

THE Apoſtle tells us in the Words immediately after the *Text*, That *the carnal Mind is Enmity againſt God: For it is not ſubject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.* From whence he concludes, that *they that are in the Fleſh, cannot pleaſe God.*

THE Apoſtle's Diſcourſe here, is directed to Chriſtians: And he plainly tells them, that though they are Chriſtians, and have received the Goſpel, they cannot be ſaved, unleſs they ceaſe to walk after the Fleſh; becauſe That runs directly counter to the Law of GOD, and can never be brought into Conformity and Subjection to His Commands. The carnal Mind is wholly taken up with the Buſineſs and Pleaſures of this Life; but GOD calls us to attend upon Affairs of another Nature and a higher Concern. They that are under the Law in their Members, are for doing their own Wills,

and

and following the Inclinations of their own corrupt Nature; but GOD requires us to do His Will, to deny ourſelves, and renounce the Works of the Fleſh. SERM. XIV.

THEY are for ſetting their Affections on Things below, and laying up Treaſures on Earth; but the Commandment enjoins us to ſeek the Things above, and to lay up for ourſelves Treaſures in Heaven. The Principle they are under, inclines them to ill, if it does not directly engage them in it: It diſpoſes them to love, if not to do, thoſe Things which GOD forbids and abhors. But the Goſpel commands us to mortify and kill the Root and Principle of Sin, as well as to forbear the outward Acts of it: To delight in the Law of GOD in the inner Man, as well as to practice it in External Deeds.

SO that they who are carnal, who ſtill retain a Liking for that which is evil, and are deſtitute of a true Love and Value, a thorough Eſteem and Approbation of what is holy, juſt and good; neither they, nor any Thing

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they do, is pleaſing unto GOD. Their beſt Works are but dead Works, while they continue in ſuch a State; becauſe they want the Life and Spirit of true Religion. Even while they outwardly comply with the Divine Law, they are at Enmity with GOD in their Hearts; where they have a Law of their own which is dearer to them than GOD's, and which they would be glad ſhould take Place of His. Now ſuch a ſettled Contravention as there is in the carnal Mind to the Divine Precepts, cannot be ſuffered by the Supream Lord and Governour of the World in any of His Creatures, without foregoing His Sovereignty, and giving up the eternal immutable Rule of Right, to the overturning the very Foundations of all Order and moral Rectitude in the intellectual World. And This, even in the Judgment of Men themſelves, will always be thought a neceſſary Piece of Juſtice, for the keeping out of Anarchy, Diſorder, and Confuſion; that thoſe refractory Subjects who ſet up their own Inclinations for their Rule, againſt the Law which was made to

reſtrain

reſtrain thoſe very Inclinations; ſhould feel the Severity of the Law, without which the Authority of the Law and Law-maker cannot be preſerved. SERM. XIV.

To conclude: If after we have embraced the Goſpel, and made Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Religion, we are ſtill in a carnal State, CHRIST is become of none Effect to us, and will profit us nothing; for 'tis the great Deſign of the Goſpel, to raiſe our Minds to a Love and Reliſh of ſpiritual and heavenly Things, and to promote the Divine Life in us. To this End we are aſſured of conſtant inward Supplies, to ſupport and ſtrengthen our Endeavors, and enable us to ſubdue the Fleſh, and bring into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of CHRIST. And if our Religion has not this Effect upon us; if we are acted merely by an external Law, and have no Law in our Minds inclining us to the Performance of our Duty; our Religion is vain; it is troubleſome to us now, and will be unprofitable to us hereafter. But if we ſerve GOD in the Spirit of our Minds, if our Religion takes Place in

SERM. XIV. our Hearts, and our inner Man yields and is ſubdued to the Rules of Goodneſs; This is truly acceptable to GOD, and beneficial to ourſelves. The Work of ſuch Righteouſneſs will be Peace now, and the Effect of it Quietneſs and Aſſurance for ever.

MATTH.

MATTH. vi. 22, 23.

The Light of the Body is the Eye: If therefore thine Eye be ſingle, thy whole Body ſhall be full of Light. But if thine Eye be evil, thy whole Body ſhall be full of Darkneſs. If therefore the Light that is in thee be Darkneſs, how great is that Darkneſs!

IF we ſuppoſe theſe Words to have a ſtrict Connexion with what went before, we muſt underſtand by the ſingle Eye, Liberality; and by the evil Eye, Covetouſneſs: For this was the Subject of the two preceding

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preceding Verſes; And in this Senſe, theſe Expreſſions are frequently uſed in Scripture.

BUT it will be difficult to give the Words their full Scope, under this Reſtriction; and therefore I rather think that our SAVIOUR, according to His uſual Manner, takes Occaſion from this particular Inſtance, to advance a general Doctrine; and from the ill Influence which Covetouſneſs has upon our Minds, cautions us againſt letting our Minds be biaſſed by Any wrong Judgment, and ſuffering ourſelves to be carried away by Any corrupt Paſſion or inordinate Affection; upon Account of the bad Effect this will have upon our Conduct, upon our whole Life, and all our Actions.

FOR what the Eye is to the Body, that is the Mind or Underſtanding to the Life of Man. When the Eye is ſingle, that is, clear and free from any Diſtemper or vicious Humour, the whole Body is full of Light: We can then ſee how to direct its ſeveral Members in their Motions, as if it had Eyes in every Part. But when the Eye is evil, when that is vitiated and corrupted, dim and obſcure,

obſcure, it either ſees Things in a wrong Light, or not at all; and then our whole Body is full of Darkneſs, and we cannot direct our Steps, nor order our Goings. So if our Mind and Underſtanding be free from any falſe Byaſs, from any corrupt Paſſion, or partial Affection; if our Judgment be right, and our Opinion of Things grounded upon Truth; then our Life has a true Guide to rule it, and our Conduct will be wiſe and right: But if our Judgment be vitiated and corrupted, if our Mind be ſtocked with wrong Notions and falſe Principles; if our Underſtanding be miſinformed, and our Conſcience erroneous; if that which ſhould be our Guide, be blind itſelf; if that which ſhould enlighten us, be dark itſelf; we have then nothing to direct us, but ſhall be expoſed to infinite Errors and dangerous Miſtakes; and the farther we go on, we ſhall be ſo much the more out of our Way, without any Proſpect of coming right. How great is That Darkneſs! What Diſorder and Confuſion ſhall we then be in! How wretched and miſerable muſt be ſuch a State!

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THE Words thus explained, naturally lead me to conſider, how much it concerns us to keep our Minds free from any vicious Paſſion, or inordinate Affection; the great Importance of preſerving our Judgment clear and uncorrupt, of having our Underſtandings rightly informed, and being under the Influence of true and ſtable Principles; ſince this is our greateſt Security againſt Sin and Error, and will give a right Turn to our Life and Actions.

IN handling this Subject, I ſhall,

I. BRIEFLY, and in general, ſhow the Influence which Mens Principles have upon their Practice.

II. I SHALL diſtinctly conſider the different Effects of good and bad Principles.

III. FROM whence it will be evident in the Third Place, How much it concerns us to furniſh our Minds with good Principles, and to take care that no ill Principle whatever prevails over us.

IV. AND

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IV. AND *Laſtly*, I ſhall cloſe all with Two or Three Inferences and Obſervations from the whole.

I. BRIEFLY, and in general to ſhow the *Influence* which Mens *Principles* have upon their *Practice*.

THE Judgment of the Mind is the Guide of Life; and for the moſt part, Mens outward Actions are governed by their inward Sentiments and Opinions. They form to themſelves ſome Deſign, and lay down ſome Principle or other; and This, whatever it be, gets the Aſcendant of every Thing elſe, is moſt of all in their Minds, and has the prevailing Sway in their Actions. Hence 'tis very common for Men, when they they are asked a Reaſon, why they do this or that, why they follow ſuch or ſuch a Courſe? to reply, *This is my Principle, this is my Judgment in the Caſe.* And whatever this Principle or Judgment be, they generally act accordingly.

WHATEVER we judge moſt valuable, and ſet our Heart upon, it will partake moſt of that Object. If our Hearts be

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be ſet upon Riches, they will be found amongſt the Stuff, and we ſhall mind earthly Things, and our whole Man will be engaged in laying up Treaſures in this World. If ſenſual Pleaſure be our chief Delight, we ſhall be immerſed in the Body, our God will be our Belly, and we ſhall ſtudy nothing ſo much as the Gratification of our bodily Appetites and Inclinations. If we place our Happineſs in being applauded and cryed up by others, we ſhall be carried away with Pride and Vain-glory, calculate all our Actions for publick View, and do any Thing that is bad to obtain the good Word and the good Opinion of Men. But if inſtead of thus judging, if inſtead of ſetting the greateſt Value upon this World's Goods, and letting our Hearts be captivated with the Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eye, and the Pride of Life; we eſteem theſe Things to be of an indifferent Nature, and inferior Concern; and are perſuaded that there are other Things within our Reach, of infinitely greater Conſequence and Value: This will raiſe our Minds to other Contemplations than thoſe Men indulge, who look not beyond

beyond this Spot of Earth, and thoſe perishing Things which are here to be had. SERM. XV.

THIS will give a new Turn to our Thoughts, and put us upon other Purſuits. Inſtead of ſtriving to pleaſe Men, and gain popular Applauſe; we ſhall ſtudy to recommend ourſelves to our Heavenly FATHER, and ſeek the Honour which cometh from GOD only. Inſtead of laying up for ourſelves Treaſures upon Earth, and labouring for the Meat that periſhes; we ſhall lay up for ourſelves Treaſures in Heaven, and deſire That Meat which endureth to Eternal Life. In a word, We ſhall then chooſe what is abſolutely beſt, and cleave to what is beſt, and purſue it, without ever deviating or ſwerving from it in any of our Actions. Such is the Influence which Mens Principles have upon their Practice; they give a Tincture and a Savour to all their Actions, and the general Courſe and Bent of their Lives depends upon them.

AND thus it muſt needs be, as long as Men do not act by any natural Neceſſity, by any blind Inſtinct or Impulſe, nor are under the Power of giddy Chance,

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Chance, or over-ruling Fate and Deſtiny, but are Rational and Free Agents, and left to their own Liberty and Choice: They cannot but be determined by their Judgment and Opinion of Things, and ſquare their Actions according to the Notions and Principles they have imbibed. The Reaſon of their Minds will be the Rule of their Practice, and their Paſſions and Affections will follow their preſent Judgment.

WHETHER they reaſon well or ill, whether they judge right or wrong, is another Queſtion. But there can be no queſtion made, whether their Conduct and Behaviour be influenced and guided by their Notions and Sentiments.

I proceed therefore in the

II. PLACE, to conſider more diſtinctly, the different Effects of Good and Bad Principles.

1. OF the good Effect and Influence of good Principles.

IF *our Eye be ſingle*, if we are free from all falſe Notions and corrupt Opinions; if we have a true Judgment of what is our chief Happineſs, and wherein

wherein it consists; what is the great End of Life, and what are the Ways which lead to that End: *Our whole Body will be full of Light*, and, as St. *Luke* adds, *having no Part dark, the whole shall be full of Light, as when the bright shining of a Candle doth give thee Light.* Discretion will then guide us, and Understanding will keep us; and our whole Life and all our Actions will be ordered right, and have an uniform Tendency to promote our true Interest. We shall then be steady and constant in the Pursuit of the *one Thing needful*, without ever standing still, or diverting to any other End.

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Luke xi. 36.

THIS will prove our best Security both against the Enticements of our own Lusts, and the Allurements of the World. Whatever Temptations we meet with, and many we must expect to meet in every State and Condition of Life; will lose their Force, and easily be repelled, if we have firm and stable Principles of Piety and Virtue, *if our Eye be single*, if we be at Unity with ourselves; and it be our settled Judgment, and fixed Principle, in no Case,

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and upon no Account whatever, to forſake GOD's righteous Judgments.

THE Man that has a true Principle of Honeſty and Honour, will ſcorn to oppreſs or defraud his Neighbour, even his greateſt Enemy, though he could do it with never ſo much Secrecy and Safety. He will never violate his Conſcience, nor part with his Integrity, though he could gain the *Indies* by ſo doing. For he does not believe Right and Wrong, Honeſt and Diſhoneſt, to be defined only by Law, and not by Nature; if he did, wherever he could eſcape the Law, he would think himſelf at Liberty: But he believes himſelf to be under Obligations antecedent to all Human Conſtitutions: And this furniſhes him with other Meaſures of Moral Rectitude and Pravity, and more ſtedfaſt Principles of Action.

HE that firmly believes the unſpeakable Joys and endleſs Happineſs of another Life, will never be captivated and enſnared by ſenſual Pleaſures, and drawn into a Forgetfulneſs of himſelf and the great Things he is deſigned for; but will conſider that he is a Stranger and a Pilgrim

Pilgrim here; and will, for that Reaſon, abſtain from thoſe fleſhly Luſts which war againſt the Soul. SERM. XV.

WHENEVER he has Occaſion offered him of making a Figure in the World, and raiſing his Name and Reputation by unlawful Means; he will remember that he is the Servant of GOD, and will recommend himſelf to Him, however he may be condemned or approved by Men. Whatever Provocations he may meet with to Anger and Envy, Malice and Revenge, or any other irregular Paſſion, he will ſtill be Maſter of himſelf, and keep within due Bounds. His Principles will make him ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, or at leaſt will hinder him from being tranſported into any unjuſtifiable Exceſs. Of whatever Kind the Temptatation be which aſſaults him, he is ready furniſhed with Conſiderations which will enable him to bear up againſt it. Whatever ſollicits him, his Anſwer is ſtill the ſame: *Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou ſavoureſt not the Things that be of* GOD, *but the Things that be of Men.* As long as he keeps his Eye ſingle, and his Judgment

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uncorrupted; while he retains a true Principle of Virtue, and a right Reliſh for ſpiritual Things; as long as his Eye is fixed upon the *one Thing needful*, and 'tis his Judgment that he ought to purſue that, whatever becomes of every Thing elſe: He will ſee Things in a clear and diſtinct Light, and will not eaſily be impoſed upon through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin.

AND if at any time he falls through Weakneſs or Inadvertency, Ignorance or Surprize, he will quickly ſee his Error, and recover himſelf out of the Snare of the Devil. The good Principles which he always carries about him, and which are rooted in him, will, through the Grace of GOD, prove a powerful Means of raiſing him up. He will reflect with Shame, that he has deſerted the Cauſe he had eſpouſed, forſaken the Rule he was to walk by, acted contrary to his own Maxims. And this will make him uneaſy 'till he has got again into the right Way, 'till he has corrected what was amiſs, and brought his Practice to an Agreement with his Principles.

SUCH

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SUCH is the good Effect and Influence of a ſingle Eye, of a ſound Judgment, and firm Principles of Religion and Virtue. This is the beſt Preſervative againſt Sin and Error, and the moſt effectual Means of our Recovery.

WHICH will more fully appear, if we conſider,

2. THE ill Influence and Effect which bad Principles have upon us.

'TIS neceſſary for us to have ſome Principles or other, if we would have our Life anſwer any Purpoſe. Without this, we are like the Double-minded Man, whom St. *James* deſcribes, who *is unſtable in all his Ways*: Jam. i. 8. who has no particular Intereſt to ſerve, but is divided between ſeveral; between the Intereſt of this World, and of the other. Such a Man is always weak and wavering, unſtable and inconſtant in all his Actions. He has ſeveral Ends to ſerve, which many times croſs one another; and ſo he purſues none of them vigorouſly; but while he is moving towards one, inclines to another; and like a Needle

SERM. XV. between two Loadſtones, is ever in a trembliing Poſture, and *doubtful ſtate* of Mind.

THIS is the Condition of a Man that has no Principles at all.

NEXT to this, 'tis as bad to have no good Principles, no true Principles of Religion and Virtue; for without theſe we ſhall be expoſed to every Temptation, and liable to change with every Wind. Having no fixed Principle within us, we ſhall adhere to nothing upon any firm Grounds; but ſhall be ever varying, as the Complexion of our Body, or the Temper of our Mind, or the Circumſtances of external Affairs happen to alter. We ſhall be Superſtitious at one Time, Careleſs or Prophane at another; now a Sceptick, and then a Dogmatiſt; of one Religion to Day, and of another to Morrow, and the next Day of neither; and at laſt, perhaps, of no Religion at all.

AS long as the World goes well with ſuch a Man as this, and he finds his Intereſt in his Duty, he will be loyal to his Prince, true to his Country, and faithful to his Friend: But whenever the Times alter, and theſe Virtues

Virtues are out of Faſhion, and become the Object of Scorn and Reproach, and cannot be practiced without apparent Hazard to his own private Intereſt; he will baſely deſert them, and will be ſure to ſave himſelf, whatever becomes of every Body elſe. And this will put him upon any Acts of Treachery and Injuſtice, of Force or Fraud, which are neceſſary to compaſs his Self-ends. SERM. XV.

THUS inſecure will that Man be of himſelf, who wants the ſingle Eye, who is deſtitute of good Principles; and ſuch wild and contrary Sallies will he be ſubject to. He is governed only by preſent Intereſt or Humour; and upon the leaſt Variation of theſe, he will quickly be ſupplanted, reel and ſtagger like a drunken Man, and be at his Wit's End. And whenever he falls, he has nothing to help him up; for he has no Principles of Religion and Virtue; which, as I before obſerved, next to the Grace of GOD, are the beſt, if not the only Means of reclaiming us from the Error of our Ways.

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BUT now ſuppoſe, that inſtead of the bare want of good Principles, a Man hath imbibed ſuch as are really bad; that he has an *evil Eye*, a corrupt Judgment, an erroneous Conſcience: What Dangers and Miſchiefs will not ſuch a Man be expoſed to, and what Wickedneſs will he not commit? He is ready prepared for any evil Work he ſhall be put upon, by the Enticement of Sinners, the Suggeſtions of the Devil, or his own wicked Heart.

1 John ii. 11. *He walks in the dark, and knows not whither he goeth, becauſe the Darkneſs hath blinded his Eyes.* He falls into Miſtake upon Miſtake, runs from one Miſchief into another, and adds Sin unto Sin.

HIS *whole Body is full of Darkneſs*, and he neither knows nor obſerves any Difference in his Actions. The Iniquity he commits, he does not ſee to be ſuch; but perhaps thinks it to be good, and believes himſelf obliged to commit it, and therefore commits it with Greedineſs. For there is no Wickedneſs ſo obſtinately perſiſted in, and ſo furiouſly purſued, as that which proceeds

ceeds upon Principle, upon a falſe Perſuaſion of Mind. And therefore if we find it ſo difficult, even by the Help of good Principles, to preſerve our Integrity, and reſiſt the Temptations we meet with; if the Weakneſs and Depravity of our Natures be ſuch, that even with this Aſſiſtance we cannot always ſtand upright; what will become of us, if we want it? But if we not only want good Principles, but our Minds are ſtocked with ill ones, we ſhall then fall with double Force, and our Recovery will be exceeding difficult. When Temptations from without, meet with ill Principles from within; they will take take faſt hold of us, and we ſhall be led Captive by the Devil at his Will. When *the Light that is in us, is Darkneſs*, what a hideous Darkneſs will then overwhelm us? And *when the Blind lead the Blind*, it muſt needs be that *both fall into the Ditch.* SERM. XV.

HENCE it will evidently appear in the

III. PLACE, How much it *concerns* us to furniſh our Minds with good Principles,

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Principles, and to take Care that no ill Principle whatever prevails over us.

WHAT the Eye is to the Body, That, our SAVIOUR tells us, is ſome leading Principle in the Soul, to the Soul of Man. And 'tis of as much Conſequence to the Soul, that this leading Principle be right; as 'tis to the Body to have our Eye-ſight clear and good: And ſo much more ſo, as the Soul is more valuable than the Body. If therefore we juſtly reckon Thoſe miſerable, who are deprived of the Light of the Sun, who grope at Noon-day as in the dark, ſeeking for ſome to lead them; and inſtead of that beauteous Proſpect which the Works of Nature afford others, are preſented with an univerſal Blank: How much more deplorable is the Condition of thoſe Men, whoſe *Minds* are blinded, and their *Souls* over-ſpread with Darkneſs, with Ignorance and Error, or thick Miſts of vicious Luſts and Paſſions; who diſcern not the Beauty of Holineſs, nor ſee the Wonders of GOD's Laws; but are blind to their true Intereſt, and ſit down in Darkneſs, and the Shadow of Death.

THIS

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THIS ſpiritual Blindneſs can no other Way be prevented, but by keeping our Eye ſingle, and our Judgment right, and our Reaſon uncorrupted by any falſe Principle, vicious Paſſion, or inordinate Affection. For whenever any thing of this Kind becomes the leading Principle in us, whether it be Senſuality, Avarice, or Ambition; it will turn us out of the right Way, and lead us through dark and ſlippery Places, where we ſhall find it difficult to keep our Feet, and uphold our Goings. If our Reaſon be not the Guide and Superintendent of our inferior Powers, but is under Subjection to them; if it be obſcur'd or extinguiſh'd, byaſs'd or perverted by any wrong Motive; every Thing will be out of Courſe, and nothing but Confuſion and Diſorder will enſue. If we judge amiſs, and are under the Influence of any great Error or Deluſion; Vigor and Activity, inſtead of helping us forward on our Journey, will lead us the more out of our Way: Diligence and Induſtry will prove miſchievous and fatal, and inſtead of promoting

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moting our Intereſt, will procure our Ruin, and haſten our Deſtruction. Every Step we take, upon a miſtaken Principle, upon a falſe Notion of what is our true Happineſs, and the Way that leads to it, upon a wrong Senſe of what is our Duty and our Intereſt; I ſay, every Step which we thus take, is dangerous, and may end in our Ruin. But, at leaſt, 'tis ſo much Time and Labour loſt; 'tis not only going out of the Way that leads to our main End, but 'tis going directly from it; 'tis going ſo far, to return as far back again; 'tis doing what we muſt undo, and cutting out Work for a bitter Repentance.

WHEREAS, if we proceed upon right Principles, and act upon true Notions of Good and Evil, of what makes for or againſt our chief Happineſs: Every Step we take does really Advance us in the right Way; and whatever we do in Purſuance of theſe, will turn to a good Account, and help forward our main End. There will then be Light, and Order, and Beauty, in our ſeveral Actions, and they will all conſpire

to

to promote our true intereſt. We ſhall have a clear Proſpect of our great End, without any thing to intercept our View, or divert our Courſe: And we ſhall ſtear through all the Waves of this troubleſome World, through all the Mazes and Windings, all the Perils and Dangers of ſuch a difficult Paſſage; to that Haven of Happineſs, that Eternal reſt, which remains for the People of GOD. SERM. XV.

OF ſuch Importance is it to have our Minds furniſhed with good Principles, and to prevent ill ones from prevailing over us; ſince upon this depends the wiſe Conduct of our Lives, the right ordering of our Actions, the obtaining Eternal Happineſs, and avoiding endleſs Miſery. I come now in the

IV. AND Laſt Place, to apply what has been ſaid, in ſeveral *Inferences* and Obſervations.

1. HENCE appears the great Uſefulneſs and Neceſſity of Knowledge and Underſtanding, eſpecially in Religion and Matters of a moral Nature. 'Tis St. *Peter*'s Advice, that we ſhould *add to* 2 Pet. i. 5.

our

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our Faith Virtue, and to Virtue Knowledge. And St. *Paul*'s Prayer for the *Philippians* is, That *their Love may abound more and more in Knowledge, and in all Judgment.* And he diſparages one of the moſt excellent and illuſtrious Things in all Religion, becauſe it was not under the Influence and Direction of Knowledge. *They have a Zeal for* GOD, ſays he, *but not according to Knowledge.* And to name no more, our Bleſſed SAVIOUR blames the *Samaritans*, becauſe *They worſhipped they knew not what*; and prefers the *Jews* before them, becauſe they knew *what they worſhipped.*

Rom. x. 2.

John iv. 22.

OF ſuch account is Knowledge and Underſtanding in Religion. And This not only becauſe thoſe Actions which are done without the Uſe of our Underſtanding, are not the Actions of a Man, but of ſomething that is ſhort of Man, and have no more Virtue in them than the Actions of a mere natural Agent; but chiefly becauſe our Knowledge and Underſtanding will have the main Direction of our Lives and Actions. Such as our Principles are, ſuch in the main will

will our Practice be. If we have right Notions of GOD and Religion, juſt Apprehenſions of the Beauty and Excellence of Virtue, and of the Baſeneſs and Deformity of Sin; This will not only put us into the right Way, but keep us in it. But if we entertain any falſe Opinions of GOD and Religion, they will produce many Errors and Miſtakes in our Practice; and we ſhall turn from the Practice of true Piety and Virtue, into a blind Superſtition, or an ignorant Zeal, which will betray us into an unwarrantable Courſe of Proceedings. If we think of any thing worſe than of Sin, and and are leſs afraid of it than we are of Poverty or Pain, Shame and Diſgrace; we ſhall ſoon be drawn into it. And if we prefer any thing before Virtue, whether it be Riches, or Honours, or ſenſual Gratifications; we ſhall not long retain our Innocence, but ſhall be ready to give it up to any Temptation we meet with. SERM. XV.

2. FROM what has been ſaid, it appears how cautious we ſhould be in the Choice of our Principles; as much as

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as we ſhould be in the Choice of a Guide to conduct us through an unknown and difficult Way.

OUR Principles will have the Rule and Government of our Lives; and therefore we ſhould never take them upon truſt, without examining into them, and ſeeing whether they be ſound and good. For if we ſet out wrong, and build upon a falſe Bottom; our Work will never abide the Tryal: And though we ourſelves ſhould be ſaved, yet it will be, as the *Apoſtle* expreſſes it, ſo as by Fire, *i. e.* it will be difficult, and we ſhall narrowly eſcape the Danger.

1 Cor. iii. 15.

FOR though a good Intention will juſtify an indifferent Action, a Thing in itſelf lawful; yet in Matters directly Sinful and Unlawful, this Maxim has no Place. 'Tis our Duty, and ſhould always be our firſt Care, to inform our Conſciences, and get a right Judgment in all Things; and then to act agreeably to this Knowledge, and according to the beſt of our Judgment. But if we neglect the firſt of theſe, we ſhall certainly fail

in

in the ſecond, and that Failure will be placed to our account. SERM. XV.

THE Wiſe Man ſtiles our Reaſon, *The Candle of the* LORD, which He has lighted up in every Man's Breaſt to direct his Goings; and 'tis incumbent upon us to keep in this Light, to cheriſh and improve it, that we may ſee our Way to Happineſs, and diſcern thoſe Things which make for our Peace. But if we wilfully obſcure or extinguiſh this Light, by any Luſt, or Vice; by any unreaſonable Prejudice, Partiality, or Paſſion; Darkneſs will then overtake us indeed; but we ourſelves ſhall be ſeverely reſponſible for every wrong Step we take, every Error or Miſtake we are guilty of.

TO this natural Light, GOD has been pleaſed to add a new and an additional Light of Revelation. His Word, as well as our own Reaſon, is *a Light to our Feet, and a Lanthorn to our Paths.* But if we come to the Reading of GOD's Word, with any vicious Prejudice or ſinful Partiality; not to diſcover the Divine Will, but to gratify our own; not to find out the Mean-

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ing of the HOLY GHOST, but our own private Sentiments and Opinions; Even this Light may be turned into Darkneſs, and we may loſe our Way, and follow thoſe Paths which lead down to Death, while we have in our Hands the Words of Eternal Life. And if this be the Caſe; if by any falſe Principles we have taken up, any wrong Judgment we have made, any corrupt Paſſion or Affection we have ſuffered to prevail over us, we pervert our own Reaſon, and wreſt the Scriptures; we have then nothing to guide us, but ſhall be abandoned to the Power of our Luſts, and the Wiles of the Devil, If both the Light of Nature and Revelation be turned into Darkneſs, how great is that Darkneſs!

3. HENCE appears the great Evil and Miſchief, both the Sin and the Guilt, of impoſing upon Mens Underſtandings, miſinforming their Judgments, and inſtilling falſe Notions and Principles into their Minds: Since this is to betray them to a Guide that will aſſuredly miſlead them, and inſtead of conducting

conducting them to Heaven, will bring them into the Pit of Deſtruction. SERM. XV.

MANY ſuch Principles as theſe, are profeſſed and taught by the Church of *Rome*; ſuch as not only make void the Commandments of GOD, and render a virtuous Life needleſs; but ſuch as directly encourage the vileſt and moſt barbarous Practices.

WITH them, Confeſſion to a Prieſt; and Abſolution, to which they are entitled by the mere Fear of Hell, which they call Attrition; are ſufficient to Salvation.

THEY have inſtituted various Penances and Expiations, whereby Men are taught that they may eſcape the Puniſhment, though they retain the Sin; and even theſe too can be diſpenſed with at Pleaſure.

BUT they have the leſs Reaſon to invent eaſier Methods of procuring Pardon for Sin, than Repentance and Amendment; becauſe they have Ways to prevent moſt Sins from being Sins, and even to ſanctify Vice, and turn it into Virtue. If, for Inſtance, the Caſe be that of Murther, 'tis but firſt pronouncing the

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Man to be a Schiſmatick or Heretick, and all are ſuch who diſſent from them; and then he may be excommunicated and killed, not only without offending GOD, but even with acceptable Service to Him.

THEY teach it to be lawful for a Man to act according to a probable Opinion: And That with them is probable, which is maintained by any one or more of their celebrated Caſuiſts: So that at this Rate there is hardly any Villany but may be practiced, ſince there is ſcarce any Thing ſo vile, but what has, amongſt them, Some to patronize and defend it.

THEY maintain that a good Intention is ſufficient to juſtify any Action; and that 'tis lawful to do that which is materially evil, provided we direct the inward Intention of our Minds to a good and honeſt End. And what Wickedneſs is there, that ſuch a Principle will not juſtify?

IN general, for it would be endleſs to deſcend to all Particulars; they preſs Men upon an implicit Faith of whatever their Church teaches, and a blind Obedience

Obedience to whatever their ſpiritual Rulers ſhall think fit to enjoin. They oblige Men to renounce their Senſes and their Reaſon too, that they may tamely lead them whitherſoever they pleaſe, and put them upon Practices, though never ſo foul and inhuman, which they ſhall judge neceſſary for the Good of the Catholick Cauſe, *i. e.* the promoting their own worldly Intereſt and Grandeur. And this Method of Practice ſeldom fails of the deſired Effect. When Men wilfully ſtifle and ſuppreſs their own Reaſon and Judgment, and reſign themſelves up to the arbitrary Dictates of others, there is nothing which they may not be brought to commit and approve. When the Light that is in them is turned into Darkneſs, how great is that Darkneſs! and how diſmal will be the Effects and Conſequences of it!

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4. AND Laſtly; what has been ſaid, ſhould excite us to endeavour after this ſingle Eye, not only as it means in general a ſound and impartial Judgment, but in that literal Senſe which has already been hinted, as it imports Single-mindedneſs,

SERM. XV. mindedneſs, the having but one grand Purpoſe and Deſign, one ruling Principle and Affection; and that is, ſerving GOD, and ſaving our own Souls.

WE ſhould, as far as is poſſible, reduce every Thing to this ſingle Point, not to have two Maſters to ſerve, and ſeveral chief Ends to carry on at the ſame Time; not to have our Treaſure in two different Places, and our Happineſs placed in contrary Things. But to fix ourſelves immoveably upon the Attainment of Eternal Life and Happineſs, and to make every Thing we do, ſubſervient to this End; at leaſt not to ſuffer any Thing to come into Competition with it.

THIS is what our SAVIOUR means, when He tells us, That *no Man having put his Hand to the Plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of* GOD, *Luke* ix. 62. This is that *one Thing needful*, which He commends *Mary* for chooſing, while He blames *Martha* for being *careful and troubled about many Things*, Luke x. 41, 42. This alſo is the Deſign of thoſe Parables, where He compares the

the Kingdom of Heaven to a Treaſure hid in a Field, to purchaſe which a Man ſells all that he has; and to a Pearl of great Price, for which the Merchant will part with his whole Subſtance. All which intimate and recommend to us the ſingle Eye, That one Purpoſe, upon which we ought to fix our Minds, and in which all other Aims and Views ſhould center. While we keep to This, our whole Body will be full of Light, our Actions will be all of a piece, and have an uniform Tendency to bring us to thoſe Regions of Light and Bliſs, which are inhabited by wiſe and holy Souls. But if we ſuffer ourſelves to be diverted by any Thing from this one End, and, while we pretend to purſue it, have our Eye fixed upon other Deſigns; our Actions will then croſs and contradict one another, and we ſhall be in the utmoſt Darkneſs and Confuſion, and ſhall at laſt inherit the Folly of our Choice, and have our Portion in that Kingdom of Darkneſs, where there is nothing but Weeping and Wailing and Gnaſhing of Teeth; the Sting of Guilt,

SERM. XV. Guilt, and the Remorse of Conscience, the most vexatious Shame and Reproach, the most bitter Anguish and Vexation, the Worm that never dies, and the Fire that cannot be quenched.

FINIS.